Shooting the Joy of the Rus'

Alcohol Consumption and Alcoholism in Soviet Movies, 1953-1991

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MASTER'S THESIS – EUROPEAN AND AMERICAN STUDIES

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

Supervisor: Pål Kolstø

UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

Autumn 2012

2012

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http://www.duo.uio.no/

Print: Reprosentralen, University of Oslo

Abstract

The current thesis examines how alcohol consumption and alcoholism were interpreted in Soviet movies between 1953 and 1991, taking into consideration the shifting ideological constraints and anti-alcohol campaigns, as well as alcohol and film politics. With the help of 43 films, this research explores the socio-cultural aspects of drinking as represented in Soviet films, uncovers the beliefs about alcohol consumption and alcoholism, and observes how films as cultural texts reflect society back onto itself. Moreover, through film readings of four Soviet alcoholism movies, the research illustrates how the attitudes towards alcoholics and alcoholism developed during the 1970s and 1980s.

The study shows that in a state where, in ideological principle, socialism and alcoholism were incompatible, alcohol consumption was portrayed frequently--although filmmakers were cautions with their cinematic interpretations. Drinking occasions were very often intertwined with humorous situations and sketches that satisfied the audiences' yearnings for entertainment. The seriousness of certain scenes was hidden or brightened up with the help of catchy phrases or smoothed down through light musical compositions which gave the situation comical connotations. Similarly, it turns out that drinking location, the way alcohol is consumed and alcoholic beverages encompass various allusions both to the nature of the celebration and the social status of the drinker which, in turn, fed various societal clichés.

Moreover, one might think that anti-alcohol campaigns that intended to utilize the movie industry in educational and explanatory work would have resulted in more rigorous censorship and thematic plans calling for production of movies with anti-alcohol character. Yet, before the mid-1970s such movies were impossible to find. It was only then when the Soviet audiences were shown the images of true-to-life sobering-up stations and alcoholism treatment, orphanage with handicapped children of alcoholic parents, and drinking binges that ended with death. Therefore, in a situation when official statistics about alcohol consumption and alcoholism was inadequate or missing, we can definitely say that in one way or another, cinema played a huge role in mediating the official views and public opinion about alcohol consumption habits and alcoholism to the Soviet audiences.

Acknowledgments

Many thanks to my supervisor, Pål Kolstø, for encouragement, good advice, patience and insight in course of this interesting project.

Note on Transliteration and Translation

Transliteration from the Cyrillic to the Latin alphabet is a perennial problem for most writers on Russian subjects. I have opted for the Library of Congress System (without diacritics) in text, footnotes and Bibliography. However, I have broken from this system once and preferred name Asya to avoid confusion with the continent Asia. The Filmography includes films analyzed in Chapters 4 and 5 only; films that are occasionally mentioned in the other chapters are not listed. Soviet films are given in translation in the text, but in the Filmography they are listed both in English and in Russian for the reader's convenience. All translations of Russian language material are mine if not stated otherwise. Sometimes, when using quotations or longer extracts from the films, I have chosen to give the original text in a footnote--especially when knowing that the English translation does not capture the proper definition or mood. If the flow or freshness of the original text does sometimes get lost in translation, this is a conscious sacrifice for the sake of text availability.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Going to the movies was one of the most popular forms of mass entertainment in the Soviet Union. In fact, regarding popularity, this entertainment form had to compete with only one prevailing social phenomenon which was also considered to be a form of relaxation – alcohol consumption. Indeed, Russia is known for its subjects' fondness for heavy consumption of alcoholic drinks. Since the Middle Ages, a strong drink has been a profound symbol of celebration, courtesy, and friendship, especially in reference to male bonding. The Bolsheviks, however, considered alcohol abuse to be a legacy of the bourgeois past and declared war on everything capitalist. This meant that alcoholism was expected to be eliminated during the coming years of Communism. Film production was expected to support the ideological views of the new regime and keep movies from becoming a "wet" medium. However, soon the government's fiscal interests ran counter to their ideological objectives and alcohol sales came to fill state pockets during Bolshevik and post-Stalin Russia. Increasing revenues on account of alcohol sales and mushrooming drunkenness became a reality that was officially hushed up.

However, there were attempts made to sober up the nation. Between 1953 and 1991, the Soviet authorities initiated three anti-alcohol campaigns. Limiting alcohol sales and production volumes, however, and establishing sobering up stations and punishing bootleggers did not have any long-term effect on alcohol consumption. The authorities did not take into consideration the impact of Russian drinking culture that had intertwined itself with the growing urbanization and new socialist holidays, as well as the effect of a missing open discourse about alcohol abuse and alcoholism. For years, drink had been the curse of the working classes although such subjects as the sociological, psychological, cultural, and historic aspects of drinking and alcoholism were taboo.[1] To acknowledge the problem of alcoholism publicly, either as a medical illness or as a form of antisocial misbehavior, meant to discredit the Communist ideology.

In the Soviet Union the film industry, especially its outcome, was naturally expected to back up and reflect official views and attitudes and participate in *vospitanie* (the educating) of the state's subjects, including their excessive drinking habits. Movies were praised for both their propagandistic and financial potential. In fact, the Soviet movie ideal was *kassovyi*

[1] Boris M. Segal, *The Drunken Society: Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism in the Soviet Union* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1990), xix.

(cash) film that would contribute to the enhancement of the masses' socialist consciousness. Most unorthodox artistic experimentations of filmmakers were smothered since they were expected to mediate the images of radiant realism and future while simultaneously removing all the painful spots of everyday life. Suspicion of possible pro-capitalistic or anti-Soviet flashes within the arts kept censorship constantly on the alert. Even with the arrival of the Thaw, the film was neither expected nor allowed to be a tool for direct "social problem writing." However, flat narratives and constant *lakirovka* (glossing) offered filmmakers little or almost no artistic challenge. Yet, the Soviet thematically regulated and guarded film production system did not manage to ban the portrayal of alcohol consumption as the habit had become an essential element of everyday life. In fact, filmmakers exploited this Russian national phenomenon so often that in the 1960s, for example, the cinema leadership accused Soviet cineastes[2] of getting obsessed with the exploitation of drinking scenes. In their opinion, drinking had to be a "gun that shoots," as opposed to solely a substitute for poor narrative or acting.[3] But scenes with alcohol and boozing characters contributed to the popularity of the movies and ticket sales. Moreover, in an era when official statistics were not the most reliable source, Soviet movies, it has been argued, "generally documented Soviet life better than social scientists," especially regarding topics of attitudes towards ideology, corruption, materialism, and personal life.[4]

1.1 Research Questions

Based on the fact that alcohol was present in Soviet everyday life and films in spite of the anti-alcohol propaganda, campaigns, and ideological control exercised on film production, the main objective of the current study is: how did movies portray alcohol consumption and alcoholism in Soviet society and culture between 1953 and 1991. My intentions are three:

(1) to explore the socio-cultural aspects of drinking as represented in Soviet films;

(2) to uncover the beliefs about alcohol consumption and alcoholism embedded in Soviet films;

[2] I use "cineaste" and "filmmaker" interchangeably.
[3] Fedor Razzakov, *Gibel sovetskogo kino*. *Kniga 1. Intrigi i spory*, *1918-1972* (Moscow: EKSMO-Press, 2008), 485-86.
[4] Vladimir Shlapentokh, *Public and Private Life of the Soviet People: Changing Values in Post-Stalin Russia,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 178.

(3) to show how these representations reflect the era in which they were created, especially taking into consideration the shifting ideological constraints, temperance campaigns, alcohol and film politics.

1.2 Theoretical Framework: Alcohol in Cinema

For the past twenty years Western and Russian (as well as Russian émigré) historians, sociologists, and economists have paid considerable attention to Russians' fondness for strong drink.[5] Dozens of books, including thorough researches, have been written about the alcohol politics, the history of alcohol production and distribution, and the socio-cultural aspects of alcohol consumption in Russia. Many of these studies have been extremely useful resources for this thesis. Soviet scholars, however, for the most part researched only the medical aspects of alcohol consumption and abuse.[6] For years, according to the ruling ideology, it was presented as a *perezhitok kapitalizma* (vestige of capitalism) and this label restricted public discourse. Modern scholars have used various resources in order to uncover the complexity of the Russian drinking phenomenon and alcohol abuse, but none of them have turned to the fictional films, which, in spite of ideological restrictions, documented the Russian drinking culture in the precise time and place when it took place.

A large body of research within different disciplines, prevailingly Western, have examined the ways in which alcohol and alcohol abuse are portrayed in the movies.[7] These

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[5] Current study relies on the works by Stephen White, *Russia Goes Dry: Alcohol, State and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Laura L. Phillips, *Bolsheviks and the Bottle: Drink and Worker Culture in St. Petersburg, 1900- 1929* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2000); David Christian and Robert Ernest F. Smith, *Bread and Salt: A Social and Economic History of Food and Drink in Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Patricia Herlihy, *The Alcoholic Empire: Vodka and Politics in Late Imperial Russia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Boris M. Segal, *The Drunken Society: Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism in the Soviet Union* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1990). Most comprehensive modern historical study in Russian has been written by Irina R. Takala, *Veselie rusi: Istoriia alkogol'noi problemy v Rossii* (St. Petersburg: Zhurnal "Neva," 2002).

[6] On Soviet attitude towards alcoholism, see Vera Efron, "The Soviet Approach to Alcoholism," *Social Problems* 7, no. 4 (1960); Mark G. Field and David E. Powell, "Alcohol Abuse in the Soviet Union," *The Hastings Center Report* 11, no. 5 (1981).

[7] See Norman K. Denzin, *Hollywood Shot by Shot: Alcoholism in American Cinema* (New York: Aldine de Guyter, 1991); Francois Steudler, "Representations of Drinking and Alcoholism in French Cinema," *International Sociology* 2, no. 1 (1987); William D. McIntosh et al., "Alcohol in the Movies: Characteristics of Drinkers and Nondrinkers in Films from 1940 to 1989," *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 29, no. 6 (1999); Elizabeth C. Hirschman, "The Cinematic Depiction of Drug Addiction: A Semiotic Account," *Semiotica* 104, no.1-2 (1995); Robin Room, "The Movies and the Wettening of America: The Media as Amplifiers of Cultural Change," *British Journal of Addiction* 83, no. 1 (1988); Robin Room, "Alcoholism and Alcoholics Anonymous in U.S. Films, 1945-1962: The Party Ends for the 'Wet Generations,'" *Journal of Studies on Alcohol* 50, no. 4 (1989); Denise Herd, "Ideology, Melodrama, and the Changing Role of Alcohol Problems in American Films," *Contemporary Drug Problems* 13, (1986); Stephanie Demetrakopoulos, "John Ford's Irish Drinking Ethos and Its Influence on Stereotypes of American Male Drunks," *Midwest Quarterly* 32, no.2 (1991); Margaret M.

studies observe films as cultural texts that reflect society back onto itself. According to French social scientist Francois Steudler, who has studied representations of drinking and alcoholism in French cinema, film is "a social artifact, whose meaning is not cinematographic, but provides an ideal sphere for the perception of symbols and images, behavior patterns and representations."[8] Similarly, Norman Denzin, an American scholar who has explored alcoholism in American cinema, has argued that movies have the ability to "mirror and create, while they produce images, representations, and stories that simultaneously derive from, yet challenge, the social worlds they attempt to map and interpret."[9] However, we have to be cautious with the interpretation of the reality of alcohol consumption and alcoholism as based on how it is represented in the films. It has been argued that "a film 'screens' and frames reality to fit particular ideological, or distorted images of 'real' social relationship."[10]

Ideology is from a Marxian perspective "the set of dominant representations, beliefs, explanations and values in a given social grouping, which are known to provide a distorted, inverted view of real social relationships."[11] In Soviet society, those elements were molded by the Party ideology. Hence, when analyzing a film, we have to take into consideration all the distortions embedded within any film's text. Indeed, two Soviet émigré scholars, Dmitrii Shlapentokh and Vladmir Shlapentokh explain that "whatever the intention of filmmakers, they present in their movies their vision of some aspects of their larger social reality, even if they do so in the most allegorical ways."[12]

Still, there is value examining even films that naturally distort the existing reality, as truth is always partial and incomplete. Louis Menashe, an expert of Russian cinema and culture, has written that "when it comes to Soviet cinema, a cigar is never just a cigar: a Soviet film was never just a movie. There were always political nuances that informed the films overtly or beneath the surface, and there were political attitudes held by the audiences that went to see them."[13] The Soviet people knew how to read those nuances, although films beautified many everyday aspects with the help of *lakirovka* (glossing). This explains also the

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Basic, "Reading the Alcoholic Film: Analysis of 'The Country Girl.'" *The Sociological Quarterly* 33, no. 2 (1992).

[8] Steudler, "Representation of Drinking and Alcoholism," 46.

[9] Denzin, *Hollywood Shot By Shot*, xvi.

[10] Steudler, "Representation of Drinking and Alcoholism," 46.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Dmitrii Shlapentokh and Valdimir Shlapentokh, *Soviet Cinematography, 1918-1991: Ideological Conflicts and Social Reality* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1993), 3.

[13] Louis Menashe, *Moscow Believes in Tears: Russians and Their Movies* (Washington, DC: New Academia Publishing, 2010), xiv-xv.

tremendous popularity of cinema in the country. It has even been considered that, until *glasnost*, Soviet moviegoers "usually compared life on the screen with the developments around them."[14] It is complicated to now say, twenty years after the demise of the Soviet Union, what people actually saw in those drunken images--entertainment or rebellion. Surely, however, these images drew upon societal behavioral patterns and cultural traditions, showed stereotypes and even created others which became new fashions.[15]

1.3 Method

According to The Encyclopedia of Russian Cinema, which is the most extensive source of information on the entire history of Russo-Soviet cinema, between 1953 and 1991 3,512 movies were made in the Soviet Union including short-films, cartoons, and documentaries.[16] Unfortunately, this resource centre does not provide a thematic search tool for cinematic productions as comprehensive, for example, as the Internet Movie Database does. But having viewed hundreds of films, I picked out a corpus of films that included scenes, images and themes of alcohol consumption. However, my choice of films is subjective, random, and by no means includes all films where alcohol consumption was depicted. Also, I preferred to take under observation the period after Stalin's death since it represents the time when Soviet cinematography revived after the rather gloomy ideological and economical suppression period that followed the Second World War. The year 1991 marked the end of the Soviet Union and state-controlled film production, hence the closing time limit. In addition to the films I draw on journal articles, state decrees, and books of various disciplines, both English and Russian. The most numerous of them are unquestionably books and articles dealing with Soviet and Russian film and its development written by recognized film scholars.[17]

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[14]Shlapentokh and Shlapentokh, *Soviet Cinematography,* 17.
[15]Steudler, "Representation of Drinking and Alcoholism," 48.
[16] *The Encyclopedia of Russian Cinema*, available at http://russiancinema.ru/films/, last accessed October 3, 2012.
[17] Kenez Peter, *Cinema and Soviet Society, 1917- 1953* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Birgit, Beumers, *A History of Russian Cinema* (Oxford: Berg, 2009); Denise J. Youngblood, *Movies for the Masses: Popular Cinema and Soviet Society in the 1920s* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Dmitrii Shlapentokh and Valdimir Shlapentokh. *Soviet Cinematography, 1918-1991: Ideological Conflicts and Social Reality* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1993); Anna Lawton, *Kinoglasnost: Soviet Cinema in Our Time* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Kristin Roth-Ey, *Moscow Prime Time: How the Soviet Union Built the Media Empire That Lost the Cultural Cold War* (London: Cornell University Press, 2011); Louis, Menashe, *Moscow Believes in Tears: Russians and Their Movies* (Washington, DC: New Academia Publishing, 2010); Svetlana Boym, *Common Places: Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994); Val S. Golovskoi and John Rimberg. *Behind the Soviet Screen: The Motion-Picture Industry in the*

In my selection of films I was guided by two principles. The selected texts should possess at least one of the two following elements: (1) they depict alcohol consumption and (2) alcoholism is a main theme in the film. Altogether, this research is based on observations from 43 movies, including 2 cartoons and 6 films on alcoholism.[18] My aim was to place particular stress on the social setting of where alcohol consumption occurred, the traditions and customs connected with it, the substances consumed, the sociological background of the drinker and the purposes fulfilled with drinking. I have also paid specific attention to the behavior and psychological situations of the characters, and the treatment of inebriates and alcoholics in general.

The choice of "key films" in my analysis part, as already mentioned, may be disputed. Furthermore, I did not give preference to any specific genre when singling out films as the selection of Soviet movies that embody alcohol consumption is wide. Owing to this, I decided to analyze these movies in a separate chapter. This decision was led by another interesting find—the lack of films with alcoholism as a main theme. After thorough research, it appeared that films on alcoholism did not appear on the screen before 1975. Therefore, in order to display the possible change in ideological and cinematic views on alcoholism and alcoholics, I decided to explore this genre, as we may call it, more thoroughly by offering a close analysis of four alcoholic films: *Afonia* (1975), *Trouble* (1977), *Friend* (1987) and *Grey Mouse* (1988).

For choosing films in which alcoholism is a main theme, I have adopted Norman Denzin's concept of "alcoholism films" that he studies as a specific genre. In his book, *Hollywood Shot by Shot*, he reviewed and catalogued almost all American "alcoholism movies" before 1990. Denzin considers alcoholism films to be movies "in which inebriety, alcoholism, and excessive drinking of one or more characters is presented as a problem which the character, his or her friends, family, and employers, and other members of society self-consciously struggle to resolve."[19] In the current thesis, these are films in which the main plot of the entire movie is built around showing the consequences of and dealing with alcoholism.

The methodology I use to study films can be characterized as a qualitative cultural-interpretive studies approach to cinema. In essence it is interdisciplinary, and utilizes a combination of textual and contextual analyzes for the purpose of giving a more complex

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USSR, 1972-1982, Michigan: Ardis Publishers, 1986); Jamie Miller, *Soviet Cinema: Politics and Persuasion under Stalin* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010).

[18] Movies included into current study can be found in Filmography in chronological order.

[19] Denzin, *Hollywood Shot by Shot*, 3.

understanding of the films in question. [20] For the textual analysis, I utilize a close semiotic reading of the selected films by examining the audiovisual technique the filmmaker uses in order to convey to the spectator the message of the scene via the character or theme present when alcohol consumption or alcoholism is being represented. In the instances of contextual analysis, I explore everything that might have an effect on the textual form of a film such as: cultural, political, institutional, and industrial determinants and processes. Although a mixture of a textual and contextual analysis can be challenging, it also has enormous explanatory power. In fact, choosing an interdisciplinary approach is in line with Russian Studies which itself incorporates various disciplines. Also, when decoding my films, I often make use of the quotations and add screenshots from the movies, as these help to illustrate my analysis.

1.4 Outline

This thesis is made up of six chapters. Additional to the mandatory thesis portions (Introduction and Conclusion), Chapter 2 provides a necessary historical, political and social background for understanding alcohol consumption and alcoholism in the Soviet Union. I trace the alcohol politics of the state, anti-alcohol campaigns and temperance movements, discuss the meanings and rituals of drink, and try to classify alcohol consumers in terms of prevailing ideology. In Chapter 3, I aim to explain the development of Soviet film industry and its main ideological objectives; I show how censorship and the ideology of Socialist Realism had an impact on film aesthetics, including the portrayal of alcohol consumption. Chapter 4 focuses on mapping of images of alcohol consumption according to social setting, occasion, class and the modes that dominated the screen during the last four decades of the Soviet era. More textual and thorough analyzes of four alcoholism films in Chapter 5 will attempt to decipher the motivations and psychological situations that have led to alcohol abuse. Moreover, I show how the treatment of alcoholism in movies gradually changed in line with a more relaxed ideological climate.

[20]More about textual and contextual approach, see Graeme Turner, *Film as Social Practice*, 4th ed., (London: Routlege, 2006), 179-80.

Chapter 2 Alcohol and Russia

2.1 Alcohol and State

As attributed to its commercial potential, alcohol was, and still is, an essential income source to the Russian treasury. During the last five centuries in Russia, government control was employed mainly in two ways: either as a monopoly over production, or as a taxation force over the various stages of consumption. In the late fifteenth century, when distilled drinks reached Muscovy, their production was almost instantly taken into the hands of monasteries and private taverns--or korchmy--whose owners sensed a commercial potential in the new strong drinks. In 1552, however, Ivan IV the Terrible outlawed taverns and established special government drink shops that were known as *kabaks*.[21] He also forbade others to distill or trade in vodka, thereby taking the first step towards state monopolization of the alcohol market.[22] *Kabak*, an institution originating within the Tatar community, was meant to serve only alcoholic drinks, mainly vodka, which stood in sharp contrast with old-fashioned *korchma* that offered both alcohol and food.[23] During the seventeenth century various restrictive acts, probably best known as the Code of Laws of 1649, were issued in order to secure government sales and prohibit home-brewing, however, some exceptions were made during festival occasions.[24] Hence, the administrative control of social drinking was established.

Catherine II the Great increased state revenue from the production of alcohol by creating a tax-farming system. This meant that alongside the government-owned drink shops there also existed tax farms--basically also *kabaks*, only rented out to *otkupshchiki* (tax farmers) for fixed payments.[25] Catherine II is even believed to have pointed out that drunken masses were easier to rule.[26] Additionally, during her reign, the budget revenue derived from alcohol increased to thirty percent, making both the state and its subjects addicted to and

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[21] David Christian and Robert Ernest F. Smith, *Bread and Salt: A Social and Economic History of Food and Drink in Russia (*Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 88-9, 90, 100-5. See also Ivan G. Pryzov, Istoriia kabakov v Rossii v sviazi s istoriei russkago naroda (St. Petersburg: Avlon', 2009), 44.
[22] Stephen White, *Russia Goes Dry: Alcohol, State and Society (*Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 12-14.
[23] Irina R. Takala, *Veselie rusi: Istoriia alkogol'noi problemy v Rossii* (St. Petersburg: Zhurnal "Neva," 2002), 37.
[24] Christian and Smith, *Bread and Salt*, 91.
[25] David Christian, *Living Water: Vodka and Russian Society on the Eve of Emancipation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 32.
[26] Quoted in T. S. Porot'ko, *V bor'be za trezvost': Stranitsy istorii*, (Minsk: Nauka i tehnika, 1988), 5; Christian and Smith, *Bread and Salt*, 212-13.

dependent on alcohol.[27] The tsarist government encouraged its tax farmers to increase revenues by increasing sales and prices of distilled liquor which also explained Russia's conversion to vodka. It was clear that revenues from vodka sales were becoming a significant component of the state's budget.[28] Prior to 1863 two overlapping systems existed. After that date the state began experimenting with the excise system before finally adopting a monopoly thirty years later.[29]

During the nineteenth century, alcohol taxes were the most important single source of government revenue; these taxes fluctuated between comprising forty-six and twenty percent of income from all sources.[30] Compared to vodka, beer was financially less significant.[31] Also, contrary to vodka, beer was more troublesome to transport and its dilution could be easily detected. Despite some anti-alcohol advocates who called for government to replace vodka with beer, it even happened that the government started to restrict the beer trade which, as anticipated, increased vodka sales.[32] State regulations, including the number of drinking houses, their location and especially their increase in alcohol prices, resulted in liquor riots in 1859, when peasants protested against excessive liquor prices by attacking drink-shops.[33] In 1894, a state monopoly was introduced which lasted until 1914.[34] The monopoly reform aimed to put an end to the growing corruption and illicit trade that had resulted in the loss of much of potential liquor tax revenue. The reform's initiator, Sergei Witte, Minister of Finance, explained that monopoly was born from a concern over drunkenness and as an attempt to increase sobriety.[35]

Witte advocated control not only the quantity but also of the quality of the alcohol sold to the public. Additionally, the state called for a ban on drinking in most tea houses and *traktiry* (inns), a measure which again separated drinking from eating. The result was an increase in heavy binge drinking. Moreover, when the taverns were replaced with state-controlled liquor stores, bootlegging began to flourish.[36] Witte's controversial goals which aimed at, on the one hand, to securing of stable income from liquor sales, and, on the other,

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[27] Christian and Smith, *Bread and Salt*, 218.
[28] Christian, *Living Water,* 33.
[29] Ibid., 32-3.
[30] Christian and Smith, *Bread and Salt*, 301. See also Christian, *Living Water,* 5-7.
[31] On detailed numbers, see Christian and Smith, *Bread and Salt*, 294.
[32] Ibid., 297.
[33] Ibid., 325-6.
[34] White, *Russia Goes Dry*, 14.
[35] Christian and Smith, *Bread and Salt*, 303, 315.
[36] Patricia Herlihy, *The Alcoholic Empire: Vodka and Politics in Late Imperial Russia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 6.

improving people's health by upgrading liquor quality and campaigning against increasing drunkenness yielded fruit, at least partially.[37] Between 1894 and 1913, the revenues from liquor sales mushroomed from 297.4 million rubles to 953 million rubles although the number of drink shops was cut down drastically.[38] Takala refers to alcohol during the period of the state monopoly as Russia's "national treasure," which in terms of revenue rise proved to be an accurate description.[39] However, one could definitely not talk about changing consumption habits or improved health. Prohibition or Dry Law was introduced in 1914 with the onset of World War I; however, the legislation only meant the banning of production and sale of strong alcoholic drinks. Such a "dry" situation did not last long and surrogate alcohol, such as denatured spirits, cologne and lacquer became new substitutes.[40] It has been also argued that the prohibition was introduced primarily as a result of the drunken and disorderly behaviour of troops during the Russo-Japanese War.[41]

The Bolsheviks continued with Dry Law during the Civil War. However, after the War Communism period, the winds started to blow in the other direction. Officially, on the one hand, the state supported temperance movements and activists and propagated the image of a sober Communist. On the other hand, the government's fiscal interests ran counter to their ideological objectives. It is known that both Lev Trotskii and Vladimir Il'ich Lenin were fierce opponents of raising state revenue with the help of increased liquor sales. In 1921, Lenin said openly that exploiting state monopoly in that way would take them back to capitalism, not towards communism.[42] The view, however politically and ideologically correct, was shelved as the production of wines, and later stronger liqueurs (*nalivki*) received a steady green light. At the same time, moonshining continued to compete with state production.[43] To combat bootlegging, the government tried to lower alcohol prices and even allowed the production of beer and lighter wine for private use with no intentions of resale, yet moonshining continued.[44]

Illicit distilling became especially widespread during the Civil War, since the peasant became dependent on the income that home distilling provided. In 1925, while the production

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[37] Takala, *Veselie rusi*, 106.
[38] Ibid., 107, 113.
[39] Ibid., 127.
[40] On the substitutes, see Laura L. Phillips, *Bolsheviks and the Bottle: Drink and Worker Culture in St. Petersburg, 1900- 1929* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2000), 18; Takala, *Veselie rusi*, 172.
[41] Phillips, *Bolsheviks and the Bottle*, 17.
[42]Vladimir Il'ich Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo literatury, 1958-65), vol. 43, 326, internet archive, http://vilenin.eu/t43/p326, last accessed October 9, 2012.
[43] Takala, *Veselie rusi*, 193.96.
[44] Ibid., 200-201.

and sale of alcohol became a state monopoly, people were allowed to brew, but for their own consumption only.[45] Hence, it was the fight against illicit alcohol that became the main point of contention of the Communist government when they decided to establish a state monopoly for liquor production in 1925.[46] Interestingly, only a couple of years prior, the Communists themselves had criticized the tsarist government for filling their pockets with the help of alcohol. In other words, the socialist government revived the tsarist regime's practices and was basically repeating the "mistakes" of its capitalist predecessor. Stalin emphasized that Lenin had himself approved the utilization of liquor monopoly for "development of our [own socialist] industry, but this only as a temporary measure."[47] It did not take long before drinking reached pre-revolutionary levels. New holidays were added to the old ones, absenteeism and drinking at work became customary.[48] Statistics confirmed the developing trend: between 1923 and 1928 the state budget incomes from liquor sales increased from 2 percent to 12 percent.[49] However, the debate regarding the effects of the government monopoly and alcohol misuse statistics was not expected to take place out loud and was gradually muted by the general climate of the 1930s.

Throughout World War II, alcohol was considered an official stimulus for soldiers serving on the front. We should remember that at that time alcohol, as well as many other items of everyday diet, could not be bought freely any more. War-time alcohol politics, also labeled "Stalin's 100 grams," began with distributing vodka as anti-freeze medicine for soldiers serving in the wintertime. It was followed by official resolutions granting servicemen 100 grams of vodka per day and as much cured slabs of fatback. Even if in 1942 these amounts were cropped or adjusted in accordance with a new resolution, various holidays such as All-Union Athlete's Day or International Youth Day gave the right for individuals to obtain a bigger amount of alcohol. All in all, by the end of 1943, 4.5 million liters of vodka had been consumed on the Soviet fronts.[50] In addition, moonshining continued among the civilians and the nomenclature had their own rations and sources for the best brands. Obviously, the state had used its monopoly for encouragement purposes, and had indeed

[45] White, *Russia Goes Dry*, 19; G.G. Zaigraev, *Obshchestvo i alkogol'* (Moscow: Ministerstvo vnutrennykh del Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 1992), 37.
[46] Takala, *Veselie rusi*, 198-99.
[47] Iosif V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1946-2006), vol.10, 232.
[48] Takala, *Veselie rusi*, 197-8.
[49] Ibid., 203.
[50] Ibid., 245-48.

relieved war stress, but due to consistent "bottle-training" the number of alcoholics soared in the post-war period.

During the administration of Khrushchev and Brezhnev, the alcohol policy and the general official view on heavy drinking remained fairly apathetic. But such attitudes were almost inevitable since the Cold War armament, investment in heavy industry and various unsuccessful reforms were costly, and liquor sales contributed to the needed monetary resources. According to the principles of the planning system, in order to show progress production had to increase. The tricky thing was that in official statistics alcoholic beverages were presented as a part of overall foodstuffs, so it was clear that food industry was unquestionably on the way up. The government could therefore only confirm that fact: due to an increased demand in food products, increased supply was a must. What did this mean for the common people? The data show that between 1950 and 1970 the consumption of alcohol units per adult increased from 1.85 liters to 6.8 liters.[51] Increased supply of alcohol created its own demand. Moreover, revenues from liquor sales constantly exceeded other sources of income, making up to 29 percent of the overall state budget. It would not be inappropriate to agree with Irina Takala that communism was to a great extent built on the firewater.[52]

However, certain precautions regarding alcohol abuse were taken in December 1958, when an anti-alcohol campaign was introduced by the Communist Party's Central Committee.[53] At that time, alcoholism was regarded as a result of insufficient education and bad habits. The only way to combat heavy drinking was to change the overall attitudes, and people were taught to see alcohol abuse as an antisocial phenomenon.[54] The sale of vodka was prohibited in public places and institutions, except in restaurants, where a ration of 100 grams of vodka and cognac per customer was established. Alcohol sales were not to start before ten o'clock in the morning and selling to minors was strictly forbidden. In addition, a plan for increased production of non-alcohol beverages was set up.[55] Since canteens and cafes did not provide alcohol, consumption moved into the streets and corridors. *Militsiia* (police) were left to deal with sinners apprehended for either heavy drinking or moonshiners, whose numbers increased rapidly due to continuous heavy demand for their products. This was

[51] Takala, *Veselie rusi*, 250-51.
[52] Ibid.
[53] "Ob usilenii bor'by s p'ianstvom i o navedenii poriadka v torgovle krepkimi spirtnymi napitakmi," in *Sistematicheskoe sobranie zakonov RSFSR* (Moscow: Iuridicheskaia literatura, 1968), vol. 9, 279-81.
[54] Takala, *Veselie rusi*, 252.
[55] "Ob usilenii bor'by s p'ianstvom i o navedenii poriadka v torgovle krepkimi spirtnymi napitakmi," 279-81.

occurring despite the fact that the production of moonshine had been officially prohibited since 1948.[56]

If during the campaign of 1958 emphasis was placed upon education and propaganda, then during the leadership of Leonid Brezhnev, General Secretary from 1964 to 1982, the the main emphasis lay in promises that were made to launch a more determined campaign against alcoholism. First, persistent alcohol abuse brought along compulsory therapy. A system of fines for public drunkenness was introduced in 1966.[57] In 1972, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union launched a new campaign that called for expanding awareness regarding the alcohol question in education and the mass media, increased investments in cultural and sporting facilities and reduced production of vodka and other hard liquors.[58] On the administrative level, quite a few principles from the previous campaign were repeated. In fact, all measures undertaken for this noble cause worked much better on paper than in practice. Anti-alcohol propaganda concerning the proper utilization of free time and lectures, both at work and school, about the vices of liquor was soon forgotten. Additionally, the production stop of alcoholic beverages was never implemented. However, for the first time in the history of the Soviet Union sobering-up stations and narcology clinics were established.[59] In order to compensate for the financial losses that had stemmed from lowered sales of strong alcoholic beverages, the Soviet government increased the production of beer and fruit and berry wines, which proved to be popular (especially among teenagers and young people).[60]

It appears that, despite a more convincing anti-alcohol propaganda, the situation remained more or less the same. This was also true among the highest echelons of Soviet society. Both Brezhnev and his successor Chernenko were believed to be more than just mild consumers.[61] Also, Andropov's stricter emphasis on public order, social discipline and official struggle against parasitism did not give any substantial results. Significant results, in fact, were not achieved until 17 May 1985, when the most comprehensive anti-alcohol reform of all times in Russian history was launched. This reform not only changed the attitudes and

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[56] *Sbornik zakonov SSSR i ukazov Prezidiuma Verkhnogo Soveta SSSR* (Moscow: Izvestiia sovetskikh deputatov trudaiashchikhsia, 1959), 547.
[57] Quoted in White, *Russia Goes Dry*, 59.
[58] *Prikaz minizdrava SSSR ot 24.08.1972 n 694 o merakh po dalneishemu usilneniiu bor'by protiv p'ianstva i alkogolizma*, available at http://arhiv.inpravo.ru/data/base466/text466v514i147.htm, last accessed October 8, 2012.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Takala, *Veselie rusi*, 257.
[61] Armand Hammer and Neil Lyndon, *Hammer: Witness to History* (London: Coronet, 1988), 553.

revealed statistics, but also played an essential role, as we now know, in the fall of the Soviet Union. Gorbachev, though no teetotaler himself, considered drinking a Russian "national tragedy."[62] Officially, in order to eliminate alcoholism from Soviet life, an attempt was made to implant into the masses a general condemnation of drunkenness with the help of political, economic, administrative, educational, legal, psychological, medical and other measures.[63]

The resolution "*On measures to overcome drunkenness and alcoholism*" that Gorbachev signed barely two months after entering office was certainly a radical document. For the first time, in accordance with Gorbachev's *glasnost* (openness), socialism was shown in a more realistic light. The resolution acknowledged that the efforts of the party and state to overcome drunkenness had been poorly coordinated. Therefore, the whole campaign should be given a "genuinely mass, nationwide character" and it included more a demanding attitude towards party members and officials who abused alcohol. The "sensible use of free time" became a new priority and systematic anti-alcohol education and measures to improve leisure facilities were introduced. The media was expected to instil in people a spirit of sobriety and encourage them to participate in the campaign against drunkenness. An end was planned to homebrewing and alcohol speculation, and the annual production of vodka and liqueurs should be reduced, while fruit and berry wines were expected to disappear from the market by 1988. Public drinking was to be fined as was drinking at the workplace. Similarly to the previous campaigns, many public places and drink-shops were closed or forbidden to sell alcoholic beverages. The most famous regulation concerned the implemented time restrictions: on workdays, alcohol could be sold only after 2 o'clock in the afternoon.[64] The price of non-alcoholic beverages was reduced while the prices of vodka, cognac, fruit and berry wines were increased.[65]

The reform lasted roughly three years, from 1985 to 1987. As mentioned above, since the 1930s, the problem of alcoholism and alcohol consumption had not been researched in the Soviet Union, not from an economical, psychological or sociological point of view. Only studies regarding medical aspects of alcoholism had been implemented. Lack of knowledge, according to Takala, generated so many misconceptions and misinterpretations that the 1985 reform raised more issues than it managed to solve.[66] For example, during the three years of

[62] Quoted in White, *Russia Goes Dry*, 66.
[63] *ot 25.06.1985 n 850 o merakh po preodoleniiu p'ianstva i alkogolizma*, available at http://arhiv.inpravo.ru/texts2/document2181/index.htm, last accessed October 8, 2012.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid. Pravda, 15 August, 1985, 3.
[66] Takala, *Veselie Rusi*, 264.

the reform, the state lost six billion rubles of income.[67] As the state did not manage to substitute the liquor with any other products, however, people were left with money in their hands which boosted the shortage of goods in the stores and activated large-scale moonshining. Now, additional to the increasing vodka prices, in both the free and the black market, the price and deficit of sugar went up due to domestic distilling of raw spirits.[68] The fact that moonshining became so comprehensive made officially published data about decreased alcohol consumption questionable. Moreover, vodka competed constantly with eau-de-cologne, skin tonics, lacquers, adhesives, window cleaning fluids and many more substances which increased mortality rates.[69] Everything indicated that alcoholism had adapted to new campaign conditions.

In 1988, the Central Committee had to admit that their struggles did not bear the expected fruits mainly due to lack of engagement and interest from the side of public.[70] They loosened their grip allowing wines, beer and cognacs to be sold again in food stores.[71] This was considered the official end of anti-alcohol reforms. The time of huge criticism and resentment among the masses about the limited availability of alcoholic beverages and queuing for liquor for hours came to an end. Even if vodka sales were down by half during two years of the campaign, by 1990 it was close to its pre-campaign level.[72] New record sales of alcohol were called "slow Chernobyl" and high mortality rates from the consumption of surrogates were described as "a second Afghanistan."[73]

2.2 Combating "Green Serpent"

Ambassadors, travelers, historians and many foreign observers visiting Russia at different times have pointed out that abuse of alcohol has been "the true plague of Russian empire."[74] Besides foreign visitors, native intellectuals such as eighteenth-century Russian

[67] I. Kirillov, "Potreblenie alkogolia i sotsial'nye posledstviia p'ianstva i alkogolizma.," In *Vestnik statistiki*, no. 9 (1991): 62. It is believed that during the years of campaign, illegal stills produced more alcohol than the state itself. See *Trud*, 19 May, 1988, 4.
[68] White, *Russia Goes Dry*, 82, 85, 91,122; Takala, *Veselie Rusi*, 266.
[69] Takala, *Veselie Rusi*, 265.
[70] Pravda, 26 October, 1988, 1.
[71] Quoted in White, *Russia Goes Dry*, 138.
[72] *Narodnoe khoziaistvo SSSR v 1990 godu* (Moscow: Finansy i statistika, 1991), 132-3.
[73] Quoted in White, *Russia Goes Dry*, 139.
[74] August von Haxthausen, *Studies on the Interior of Russia*, ed. Frederick Starr (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), p.211. See also Samuel H. Baron, *The Travels of Olearius in Seventeenth-Century Russia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967), 142-45.

scholar Mikhail Lomonosov, in addition to famous writers such as Lev Tolstoi and Ivan Turgenev, were concerned with increasing alcohol consumption and alcoholism. Lomonosov, for example, accused the church of upholding health-damaging habits, such as drinking, through its customs and festivities.[75] In 1870, Turgenev narrates in one of his poems about Russia a scene in which everything and everybody is sleeping--mother, father, children, judge, merchant, soldiers. Only the tate's *kabak* is awake.[76] Tolstoi actively took part in the temperance movement having become a teetotaler after his religious conversion in the late 1880s. He openly criticized and attacked drunkenness and the state monopoly on vodka production in his many works, including *Resurrection* (1899) and *The First Moonshiner* (1886).[77]

2.2.1 First Attacks against the Plague

The conflict of interests between fiscal policy and morality kept haunting the Russian vodka monopoly for many centuries despite changing ideologies. The process of alcoholization among the Russian population is believed to have its roots in the sixteenth century when the *kabak* replaced the *korchma*. This replacement marked the government's heightened interests in liquor production and distribution.[78] The first major confrontation, however, occurred as early as in the middle of the seventeenth century when concern about drinking and drunkenness was raised and spearheaded by the church; it should be noted though, that a relaxed attitude towards booze abuse among clergy itself was also known and criticized.[79] The dialogue between government and church officials regarding public drunkenness resulted in the so-called ten year *kabak* reform in 1652, the first radical temperance reform in Russian history. The reform, which abolished tax farming and *kabak*, limited the opening hours and the number of the pot houses (institutions replacing the *kabaks*) and banned alcohol sales during the main religious holidays. The reform, however, was simply crushed by illegal traders and growing financial demands of war with Poland.[80] As the government was forced to give in due to fiscal problems and in order to boost the state budget, it went on to tax both the distiller and the retailer.

[75] Takala, *Veselie rusi*, 69-70, 76.
[76] Poem "*Dream*" from the novel *Virgin Soil*.
[77] Patricia Herlihy, *The Alcoholic Empire,* 111-17; Takala, *Veselie rusi*, 134-36.
[78] Takala, *Veselie rusi*, 31.
[79] Christian and Smith, *Bread and Salt*, 139, 152.
[80] Quoted in Christian, *Living Water*, 38-9.

Indigenous Russian anti-alcohol traditions started to develop in the second half of the nineteenth century when attacks against drinking became more frequent, and were raised in a growing number of professional medical journals of the era.[81] Additionally, local temperance crusaders and medics pointed out the connection between drink, crime and the poor performance of the Russian military.[82] Interestingly, it was actually the tax-farming system, not health issues, that gave rise to the temperance movement in Russia. The Crimean War (1853-1856) had emptied the state's exchequer and it was expected that it would be filled up again in part with raising taxes on alcohol. This induced tax-farmers to sell spirits for a higher price and diluted. The low-quality diluted vodka became known as *pozhizhe vody* ("more watery than water").

In 1877, the growing interest and concern over public alcoholism led to the founding of the Russian Society for the Protection of Public Health (*Russkoe obshchestvo okhraneniia narodnogo zdraviia*).[83] For the first time drinking was studied as a socio-economic problem, and the blame was placed poor living standards and diet that put people in a condition where, in order to endure, they drowned their severe lives in large amounts of alcohol.[84] Despite a more vocal lobbying against alcohol misuse, the main concern appeared to have been not its overall liberal attitude towards alcohol consumption, but the way it was consumed. There were debates about teaching people how to drink and giving the drink-shops a new character, where drinks would be served with food that would dampen intoxication and ameliorate drunkenness. Also, in order to teach masses the art of measuring the amounts of drinks consumed, the glass package system was introduced. These innovations, however, did not change drinking patterns and on the eve of the introduction of the state monopoly, only *kabaks* were replaced by taverns that were expected to serve state produced high quality alcohol.[85]

At the beginning of the 20th century, the temperance societies spread all over the Russian Empire, organizing "anti-alcohol days," and arranging Anti-Alcohol Exhibitions in St. Petersburg and Moscow in 1893 and 1908 respectively.[86] The debate over alcohol misuse even reflected anti-Jewish sentiments, since Jews merchants were accused of exploiting

[81] George E. Snow, "Socialism, Alcoholism, and the Russian Working Classes before 1917," in *Drinking: Behaviour and Belief in Modern History*, edited by Susanna Barrows, and Robin Room (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 246.
[82] Herlihy, *Alcoholic Empire*, 4.
[83] Snow, "Socialism, Alcoholism, and the Russian Working Classes," 246.
[84] Ibid., 247.
[85] Takala, *Veselie rusi*, 95-9.
[86] Ibid., 154-6.

liquor policy and Russian people in their own financial interests.[87] The discussion on the "alcohol question" was gradually moving into the sphere of interest of medics who initiated alcohol commissions and began to carry out various studies regarding alcohol consumption and its effects. They proposed comprehensive and systematic reforms and, moreover, to enhance overall living standard of the Russian population.[88] Debates were held at the Anti-Alcohol Congresses which took place in 1909 and 1912.[89] In 1907 the State Duma had established a commission to fight alcohol abuse.[90] Unsurprisingly, the alcohol question and the liquor monopoly became politicized, and soon every political party included a plank on combating drunkenness into its platform. But neither the tsarist nor the socialist attempts could change the dominant attitudes towards alcohol consumption. Temperance meetings that were too eager in nature caught the state's suspicious eye since such mass mobilizations could be surreptitious attempts at to undermine the state's authority.[91] Due to the expanding winds of dissatisfaction and potential revolt, the tsarist government branded every self-initiative movement as revolutionary. In fact, they began to look at teetotalers as possible rebels or the Bolsheviks.[92]

Since drunkenness had appeared to be an issue during the 1905 Russo- Japanese War with the outbreak of World War I, permanent prohibition was introduced.[93] This led to cuts in the sales of state alcohol and decreased revenue from vodka sales, but brought into effect widespread illicit distilling and trading of *samogon* (from *sam*: "self"; and *gnat*: "to distill") which directly resulted in shortage of grain. Paradoxically enough, the state had been weakened by its good will in a way that turned out to be fatal; prohibition deprived the government of about 28 percent of its income at a time when the war needed resources and the masses needed bread.[94]

2.2.2 The Bolsheviks and the Bottle

The relationship between temperance and socialism was already established already by Friedrich Engels in his *Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844*. In this writing, Engels advocated a sober socialist society, claiming that alcoholism to be an effect of

[87] Takala, *Veselie rusi*, 137-46.
[88] Ibid., 147-8.
[89] Segal, *Drunken Society*, 18.
[90] Ibid., 17.
[91] Herlihy, *Alcoholic Empire,* 12.
[92] Takala, *Veselie rusi*, 159-60.
[93] Segal, *Drunken Society*, 19.
[94] Herlihy, *Alcoholic Empire*, 145.

the bourgeois regime which will to cease after the collapse of capitalist exploitation. Hence, there is a direct causal relationship between alcoholism and industrial capital.[95] By the time the Bolsheviks inherited Russia, it was obvious that alcoholism, a multi-dimensional social phenomenon, was tightly bound to Russia's political, economic and cultural development.

The revolutionary movement took advantage of the "dry" country and Lenin concentrated on criticizing the tsarist government for introducing the liquor monopoly. This act, he claimed, caused an explosive illicit alcohol trade and deprived the peasants from incomes they could have gained from private vodka sales.[96] The socialist slogan "For a sober life" *(Za trezvyi byt*) might have sounded a bit too optimistic, since, according to Segal, in the 1920s members of the Communist Party and the Komsomol comprised up to 20 percent of all those arrested in an intoxicated state.[97] However, Lenin understood that the workers' political class consciousness could not be stimulated as long as they were, literally speaking, physically unconscious.

After declaring a prompt war against "social diseases" including alcoholism, the new socialist government asserted that that they would not exploit a trade that would take Russia "back to capitalism and not forwards to communism."[98] Gradually, alcohol factories became nationalized and the sale of strong alcohol forbidden. The "new" life was expected to be, according to Phillips, "sober, sensible, collective, and aesthetic."[99] The establishment of sobering-up stations in 1926, and a resolution that was passed at the 15th Congress of the Communist Party in 1927 urging the restriction of alcohol production and sales, the development of medical and preventive treatments and the enlightenment and education of the masses in general, clearly reflected the efforts made to propagate a negative view on alcohol consumption.[100]

As a result, it was forbidden to sell liquor to minors and it was allowed to ban alcohol sales regionally. In addition to handouts, pamphlets, posters and film clips, a national journal *Trezvost' i kultura* (Sobriety and Culture) was first issued in 1928. Between 1928 and 1929, throughout the Soviet Union, several children's demonstrations against drunkenness were

[95] Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844*, transl. and ed. by W.O. Henderson and W. H. Chaloner (California: Stanford University Press, 1968).
[96] Quoted in Snow, "Socialism, Alcoholism, and the Russian Working Classes," 250.
[97] Segal, *Drunken Society*, 60.
[98] Vladimir Il'ich Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 43, 326.
[99] Phillips, *Bolsheviks and the Bottle*, 29.
[100] Quoted in White, *Russia Goes Dry*, 23, and in Takala, *Veselie rusi*, 205, 209.

carried out where the children were demanding "sober parents."[101] Soon, a decree prohibited alcohol advertising of any kind and liquor sales in all state, cultural and public institutions at all times, as well as in drink- shops during paydays.[102] In 1928, a Society for the Struggle Against Alcoholism was formed which aimed "to assist the Soviet power in the rapid elimination of alcoholism" by creating societies or cells among masses who would raise the cultural level of people which would lead to elimination of alcohol as a source of state revenue.[103]

With the introduction of collective farming and First Five-Year Plans, the voice of anti-alcohol agitation began to fade. Stalin, as a known guardian of speedy industrialization, expected to rely greatly on the revenues from liquor sales. He planned to build "socialism in one country" which, according to his opinion, could not be done with "white gloves." [104] Alcoholism was no longer defined as "social parasitism" but as "social anomaly" that existed and did not need state interference.[105] Since the Soviet Union had wiped out the social classes of oppressors, the social roots of alcoholism had been rooted out as well. The Anti-Alcohol Society was abolished and the alcoholism question, as well as statistics concerning alcohol consumption disappeared from the press while alcohol became recognized as a form of treatment.[106] For example, the magazine *Trezvost i kul'tura* was forced to change its name into *Kul'tura i byt* (Culture and Daily Life), while the Soviet press in general became very indifferent towards alcoholism. In accordance with the prevailing atmosphere, open publication of data reporting alcohol consumption and its medicinal results was stopped. The only measures that could be taken against alcohol abuse were legal and administrative; however, in such instances only the consequences of alcohol consumption were taken into observation, not the causes.[107] Ironically, this was the time in the Soviet era when drinking was most politically dangerous, since an incautious joke blurted out in an intoxicated state, might have fatal consequences.[108]

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[101] E. I. Deichman, *Alkogolizm i bor'ba s nim* (Moscow-Leningrad: Moskovskii rabochii, 1929), 165-6.
[102] Takala, *Veselie rusi*, 211.
[103] Quoted in Laura L. Phillips, *Bolsheviks and the Bottle: Drink and Worker Culture in St. Petersburg, 1900-1929* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2000), 23-4.
[104] Iosif V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1946-2006), vol.7, 349.
[105] G. A. Bordiukov, "Sotsial'nyi parazitizm ili sotsial'nye anomalii? Iz istorii bor'by s alkogolizmom, nishchenstvom, prostitutsiei, brodiazhitsestvom v 20-30-e gg.," *Istoria SSSR*, no. 1(1989): 66.
[106] White, Russia Goes Dry, 25.
[107] Takala, *Veselie ru*si, 214-15.
[108] Segal, *Drunken Society*, 70.

The years following the World War II did not bring any significant change in the state's attitudes towards the alcohol problem. During the Khrushchev era, a new model of social control was established where the regime would "use collective organizations like the party, the Komsomol, and comrades' courts to stigmatize wrong-doers and mobilize everyday citizens against 'violations of the social order.'"[109] Social control or social pressure was curtained behind the slogan of *obshchestvennoe mnenie* (societal opinion) which justified growing party and collective intrusiveness and made everyday life, *byt*, a common (not a private) matter.[110] The demands of Communist morale led to a focus on *vospitanie*, a concept that can be rendered as both "education" and "upbringing." Basically it represented the regime's intention to reshape the values of the population and to form a New Man (*Novyi chelovek*) free from vices of capitalist life.[111]

However, the campaigns of 1958 and 1972 were shallow, concentrating on administrative changes that did not give expected results. The attempts to regulate alcohol consumption faded rapidly as the ideological view on alcohol abuse was not compatible with the drinking culture of the era. The prevention policy of both campaigns employed mainly propagandistic means, awareness of the problem should be raised with the help of propaganda, restricting alcohol sales or raising the price of the hard liquors.[112] Brezhnev was the initiator for a network of labour rehabilitation centers (*lechebno- trudovye profilaktorii*) which were expected to fill the role of re-educators for persistent drinkers. His successor, Andropov, lowered the vodka prices to combat increased home production, although it has been argued that cheaper alcohol increased consumption.[113]

2.2.3 Sobering the Nation

The detonator for Gorbachev's reforms in 1985 was not so much alcohol abuse in itself as alcohol-related absenteeism and violation of labour discipline. The resolution "On measures to overcome drunkenness and alcoholism" aimed at rooting out alcoholism by making it the most urgent issue on the national level. Simultaneously, with the campaign an All-Union Voluntary Society for the Struggle for Temperance was established in 1985. Its

[109] Edward D. Cohn, "Sex and the Married Communist: Family Troubles, Marital Infidelity, and Party Discipline in the Postwar USSR, 1945-64," *The Russian Review* 68, no. 3 (2009) : 431.
[110] Ibid., 439-449.
[111] Ibid., 438.
[112] Segal, *Drunken Society*, 426.
[113] Daniel Tarschys, "The Success of a Failure: Gorbachev's Alcohol Policy, 1985-88," in *Europe-Asia Studies*, 45, no. 1 (1992): 18.

mission was to promote sobriety in public and private life, educate and organize leisure time and recruit new members.[114] Soon a forgotten journal, *Trezvost' i kul'tura* was revived and provided "tempered" entertainment, including articles about the effects of alcohol abuse and interviews with stars promoting alcohol-free life.[115] The zero-tolerance towards drunkenness was automatically reflected in numerous alcohol-related prohibitions and restrictions. Additional to limited hours of retail sale for alcoholic drinks, the production of lighter alcoholic beverages was preferred over heavy drinks, home-brewing was prohibited, the official age for purchasing alcohol was raised from 18 to 21 and compulsory treatment of abusers initiated.[116] The Central Committee advocated penalties for drinking-related violations of labour discipline and order. It was followed by an order to increase production of different TV and radio programs, as well as movies on anti-alcohol topics.[117] People were encouraged to carry out all their everyday festivities, including wedding feasts and farewell parties before leaving for military service soberly without alcoholic beverages.

In Gorbachev's campaign, two elements were emphasized that made his reform strategy innovative compared to his predecessors. Daniel Tarschys calls them "the elite approach" and "the movement approach" where the first was directed toward the party and state apparatus expecting them to set an example for the masses which generated a "demonstration effect." The movement approach was an attempt to mobilize the society in the campaign against drunkenness which basically emphasized voluntary anti-alcohol action in society.[118] In practice this meant that party members, who constituted less than ten percent of the total adult population, got expelled for abuse of alcohol.[119] Anti-alcohol mobilization was sabotaged as the consumption of alcohol substitutes was increasing and "alcohol-free" ceremonies, such as weddings and funerals, were considered "theatrical performances."[120] The pioneers of total abstinence were mocked and their occasionally too strict view on everything that may have caused intoxication, including kefir and chocolate candies with alcohol was ridiculed.[121] In reality, Gorbachev's reforms touched only the tip of the iceberg, while the real causes of the problem remained constant. His attempt to "sober the nation" proved to be too big a nut to crack. Many ironic rhymes (*chastuski*) of the era mock the

[114] Takala, *Veselie rusi*, 268. Quoted also in White, *Russia Goes Dry*, 76-7.
[115] See White, *Russia Goes Dry*, 99.
[116] Segal, *Drunken Society*, 426-7.
[117] Ibid., 429; *Prikaz minizdrava SSSR ot 25.06.1985 n 850 o merakh po preodoleniiu p'ianstva i alkogolizma.*
[118] Daniel Tarschys, The Success of a Failure, 19.
[119] White, *Russia Goes Dry*, 91-2, 94.
[120] *Pravda*, 16 December, 1988.
[121] Quoted in White, *Russia Goes Dry*, 116; Takala, *Veselie rusi*, 269.

prevailing social and political atmosphere of the anti-alcohol campaign and clearly demonstrate the majority's attitudes towards Gorbachev's reforms:

Rooster crows at six in the morning,
At eight [o'clock]--[Alla] Pugacheva
Shop is closed for up to two [o'clock]
Gorbachev has the key
Perestroika, perestroika,
The country is in turmoil
You have to queue for vodka –
Or become cross-eyed without wine![122]

According to Takala, we can look for the reasons behind the failure of the temperance movement and anti-alcohol campaigns in the Soviet era in the general organization of Soviet society. People were unmotivated to make any big changes since they knew that the state provided them with a job and they could keep it in any case. A proper work stimulus system was non-existent, and in a situation where people with low qualifications, or even struggling with constant absenteeism or heavy drinking at work, still earned more than people with higher education, any progress towards abstinent everyday was rather moderate. Second, in the condition where most everyday products were deficient and, people were left money in their pockets, they preferred to use what was extra for something that was available and already from the olden times had been related to festivities and relaxation. Third, the attitudes towards recreation determined the way of recreation which explains the popularity of restaurants and bars. Forth, poor services in Soviet Union made alcohol a sort of lubricant for people who, influenced by national traditions, paid for friendly help with a bottle of vodka, following the slogan "ty- mne, ia- tebe" ("you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours").[123] Consequently, apart from the state alcohol policy and rather liberal temperance policy there existed, one essential element of Russian popular culture that both nourished and was nourished by policies planted by the state--Russian drinking culture.

[122] В шесть утра поёт петух / в восемь — Пугачёва/ Магазин закрыт до двух/ ключ — у Горбачёва/Перестройка, перестройка/ Взбаламучена страна/ Ты за водкою постой-ка/ Окосеешь без вина!
[123]Takala, *Veselie rusi*, 260-1.

2.3 Drinking Culture

Drinking culture was and is, undoubtedly, a part of traditional Russian popular culture. Already prince Vladimir of Kiev (980- 1015) said that "Rus' loves to drink, we cannot be without it." And by declaring so, according to chronicles, he is believed to have refused to convert to Islam, a religion which prohibits alcohol consumption and preferred Christianity instead.[124] But how did Russian drinking culture develop and what characterizes the Russian drinking pattern? The nineteenth-century German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies identified the difference in alcohol consumption between "Community" (*Gemeinschaft*) and "Society" (*Gesellschaft*).[125] In Russia, according to David Christian, by the nineteenth century drinking cultures could be divided into two sides, "one with roots in the traditional life of the rural working class community; the other associated with urbanization, and the evolution of the cash economy."[126] Similar distinction has been previously made by Boris Segal in *Russian Drinking* where he separates "ritual" and "urban" drinking.[127] Traditional drinking culture basically emphasized a collective approach to drinking, while modern culture was considered more individualistic. However, we ought to refine Christian's distinction between the two drinking cultures where traditional equals collective, and modern (or urban) equates to the individualistic (especially reading modern Russian history). The overall drinking culture of working class Russia and Soviet Union, we may claim, was a mixture of two patterns since, according to Phillips, collectivity remained "a self-conscious component of workers' drinking experience."[128] That is not only the case in the first half of the twentieth century.

2.3.1 Traditional Drinking Culture

Traditional drinking, also known as ceremonial drinking, differs from modern drinking as it included all members of a local community, even women and children.[129] As Christian describes it, drinking was a social and ceremonial activity and there were plenty of opportunities to drink in Russian society. In pre-industrial Russia, vodka and other alcoholic

[124] Quoted in Christian and Smith, *Bread and Salt*, 74.
[125] Ferdinand Tönnies, *Community and Civil Society*, ed Jose Harris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
[126] Christian, *Living Water*, 75.
[127] Boris M. Segal, *Russian Drinking: Use and Abuse of Alcohol in Pre-Revolutionary Russia* (Brunswick NJ: Rutgers Center of Alcohol Studies, 1987), 78, 140-1.
[128] Phillips, *Bolsheviks and the Bottle*, 38.
[129] Christian, *Living Water*, 83.

drinks were irreplaceable companions for religious holidays, weddings, funerals and baptisms. This explains the collective nature of ceremonial drinking. It was very common to end so-called work parties (*pomoch*) with drinking, or seal *mir* (a village community of peasant farmers) agreements with a drink.[130] Heavy traditional drinking is believed to have its roots in enforced abstinence due to economic factors since the lack of drink never taught peasants to drink moderately. In this way, drinking became a form of relaxation offering recreational therapy, however destructive, as an alternative to everyday extreme living.[131] Besides, the *kabaks*, which offered no food, certainly aggravated the effects of heavy drinking.[132]

The social nature of ceremonial drinking vacillated between pleasure and obligation, leaning mainly towards the latter. Moreover, not being able to provide a party with liquor meant to shame oneself. Therefore, the obligatory purchase of vodka and other alcoholic drinks for certain occasions had significant and direct impact on living standards and provided the government with the opportunity to exploit the demands of the peasants and the working class.[133] However, it was actually drinking in taverns that paved the way for the more modern pattern of drinking since the cash wages that were available from the industrial development had to be spent somehow. This meant that the pattern of ceremonial drinking was replaced by drinking "for no special reasons," or drinking "for fun." Here, Christian draws a distinction between the traditional drinker, who buys for ceremonial purposes and "rationally," and the tavern drinker who buys on impulse, "irrationally."[134]

2.3.2 Modern Drinking Culture

Modern drinking culture was represented by an individual whose own choice began to dominate over calendar-based alcohol consumption and locations where the recreational element prevailed over the social. As drinking now took place mostly in taverns which were male-dominated institutions, modern drinking culture also became more gendered. Additionally, Christian uses the term of "elastic drinking" to describe the situation created by regular incomes in rural areas that made alcohol consumption random. This stood in contrast to the traditional village societies were, due to lack of cash, all expenditures on alcohol were

[130] On work parties, see *Christian and Smith*, Bread and Salt, 319-22.
[131] Christian, *Living Water*, 76-9.
[132] Segal, *Drunken Society*, 3.
[133] Christian, *Living Water*, 80, 85.
[134] Quoted in Christian, *Living water*, 88-9.

more controlled and constrained by the household budget. So, all in all, there emerged in Russia a rather intriguing situation where traditional attitudes encouraged alcohol consumption while modern possibilities sustained it.[135] Again, we should not forget the traditional collective element within the modern drinking culture. For the peasantry, collective drinking that strengthened social relations and mutual enjoyment meant passing a drinking vessel from one person to another.[136] For the working class, collective drinking expressed itself in a desire to drink in company and to share the beverages or the content of the bottle equally.

2.3.3 The Meanings and Rituals of Drink

The Russian drinking style, according to the pre-revolutionary Russian priest P.A. Mirtov, is an expression of Russian broad soul, courage, generosity, escapism, and irresponsibility.[137] As a Russian proverb says, "Drink, carouse- we live only once." However, it was not so much the quantity of the Russian alcohol consumption as the peculiarity of Russian drinking manners that proved to be decisive. Strong drinks, especially vodka, are drunk at a shot accompanied by some food (*zakuska*): salt-dried fish (*vobla*), for example, pickled cucumbers or something salty. Food is not an essential element in traditional Russian drinking culture since the Soviet custom to consume vodka without meals descended directly from *kabak*-culture. Such a consumption pattern was also more likely to lead to alcohol abuse than consumption of alcohol with large meals. Therefore, a common toast "*Na zdarovie*" (to your health) preceding every glass sounds rather contradictory. Moreover, in Russian folklore, drinking while remaining in control of oneself was considered real mastery and was highly esteemed.[138] Hence the old Russian proverbs, "Drink, but keep you head clear" or "Drink, but do not lose your sanity."[139] It was also common, even in the old times, to drink bottoms up and without break, which actually had a symbolic meaning as a confirmation of a man's readiness for military action.[140] Similarly, an empty glass signified respect towards the host whereas alcohol that was left behind suggested maliciousness and disrespect.[141] Here, a

[135] Christian, *Living Water*, 90-2.
[136] Takala, *Veselie rusi*, 28.
[137] Quoted in Segal, *Drunken Society*, 95.
[138] Takala, *Veselie rusi*, 26.
[139] Пей, да дело разумей. Пей, да ума не пропей.
[140] Takala, *Veselie rusi*, 26.
[141] Ibid., 27.

good example would be the proverb "The one, who has not drunken bottoms up, has not wished good."[142]

With the industrial development, alcohol took a prominent place in the workers' lives since it became a luxury that could be afforded. Pre-revolutionary culture mixed with the new Soviet working-class culture.[143] Now, according to Segal, sobriety and moderation in drinking was considered blameworthy and a capacity for drinking large quantities was seen "as a mark of virility, valor, and breath of character."[144] Additionally, association between femininity and abstinence became widely cultivated among male workers, who questioned the sexual identity and maturity of nondrinking men. Thus, consumption of alcohol became a critical element of social maturation and distinguished grown men from children. Abstainers and teetotalers, on the contrary, were often seen as "queer", or under female control. Phillips points out that heavy drinking practices among workers were seen as "an external behavioral manifestation of worker self-identity", and it was "a way workers distinguished workers from non-workers."[145] In other words, alcohol reflected both symbolic inclusion and exclusion from a particular community and drinking was viewed as "an essential element of sociability."[146]

Alcohol consumption was clearly a social act to most workers. Workers drank rarely in solitude as collective drinking expressed "comradeship", and friendship was fundamental to everyday in working community.[147] Sharing a common drink until the alcohol supply had been exhausted emphasized social equality among workers while declining from participation would be interpreted as personal rejection.[148] Drinking on a scale far beyond the individuals' means was used to show that people were wealthy enough *zhit' na shirokuiu nogu* (to live in style) and live enough *guliat' i veselitsa* (to carouse and to have a good time). This gave alcohol a certain status within society.[149]

During the Soviet era, according to Segal, drinking became "vitally utilitarian as it was used in the search of connections, in the consolidation of business contracts and in the maintenance of good relations with superiors."[150] The less accessible alcohol became,

[142] Кто не выпил до дна, не пожелал добра.
[143] Phillips, *Bolsheviks and the Bottle*, 4.
[144] Segal, *Drunken Society*, 96.
[145] Phillips, *Bolsheviks and the Bottle*, 34.
[146] Phillips, *Bolsheviks and the Bottle* , 5, 7.
[147] Ibid., 36
[148] Ibid., 37.
[149] Segal, *Drunken Society*, 96.
[150] Ibid., 102.

especially during Gorbachev's campaign, the more it became a valuable *modus operandi*. Therefore, vodka is also named the "universal currency of Russian life."[151] And indeed, "bottle economy" proved to be vitally effective during the anti-alcohol campaign in the 1980s, when the deficiency of goods and services started to haunt the Soviet social strata. Most people were not so keen on queuing, often called a Soviet national sport, and used spirits to "speed up a transaction."

Besides social belonging and bribery, what made Soviet people's alcohol consumption so excessive? Russian folklore refers to the alleged health properties of alcohol and its warm-up properties in a cold climate.[152] In the Soviet era, however, and especially after Stalin's death, improved infrastructure, better medical help, housing residences that raised general life standard and tempering campaigns should have had some effects on alcohol abuse. The missing or hidden statistics of the era can neither confirm nor deny this assumption. We only know that in addition to birthdays, funerals and weddings, holidays like the October Revolution Day, Soviet Constitution Day, Working Class Day, Soviet Army Day, Women's Day, and "Lenin's Day," which had been established to replace church holidays and legitimize the Soviet system, gave occasion to raise one glass or more. Intertwined traditional and modern drinking cultures led to a situation where festivities without alcohol were stripped off their festivity.[153] It has been claimed that during the 1970s, people found themselves in a certain "moral vacuum" that led to anxiety, tiredness and tensions and alcohol functioned as a kind of "spiritual balance." In order to combat the lethargy of their daily lives, people chose to "escape from miserable reality into a world of drunken fancy."[154] Wise guys changed the official name of the Brezhnev era from "developed socialism" to "developed alcoholism."

2.3.4 Classifying Russian Alcohol Consumers

In the Russian literature of the nineteenth century one can find examples that reflect the overall view of how the crème de la crème of society could not be accused of alcohol misuse, since alcoholism was considered a disease and a sin of those who were unwilling to work. Although many members of the Russian royal family had been known to suffer from heavy bouts of binge drinking it was nevertheless regarded as an issue of the lower classes

[151] Hedrick. Smith, *The Russians* (New York: Quadrangle, 1976), 71-120.
[152] See Phillips, *Bolsheviks and the Bottle*, 61-3.
[153] Segal, *Drunken Society*, 101.
[154] Quoted in White, *Russia Goes Dry*, 172.

only.[155] Such preconceived ideas were fed by the fact that the peasants were the biggest producers and consumers of *samogon* and other substitutes, thus directly deceiving the state. Taking into consideration the diversity of population of in tsarist and later Soviet Russia, one could definitely find differences in drinking patterns in accordance with cultural and ethnic background of its inhabitants. Certain religious groups, such as Muslims and the Old Believers, were and are abstainers; the Siberian minorities were known as heavy drinkers while the peoples of the Transcaucasia were perceived as viniculturalists.[156]

However, as early as in 1912, an intriguing theory regarding the classification of alcohol consumers in Russia had been developed by S. A. Pervushin. According to him, there existed three types of mass alcoholism which derived from three different patterns of alcohol consumption. First, we find "bourgeois" alcoholism, which embodies alcohol consumption as a part of the everyday diet with the aim of boosting appetite. Second, there exists a "narcotic" or "social" alcoholism, customary among working class people who consume alcohol for the sake of relaxation, relieving the everyday burden and often drinking for recreational purposes. Third, a peasantry-related, "ritual" or also *bytovoe p'ianstvo* type (a Russian word which has no equivalent in English, often referred also as "everyday alcoholism"). The latter can be summarized under the motto "everybody drinks, so do I."[157] According to Takala, the mushrooming of *bytovoe p'ianstvo* got wind beneath its wings from "heroes of our time," ordinary people who set an example of a merry Russian national character with toasts, dances and festivities, and simultaneously from Nomenclature, the elite of Soviet society.[158]

Boris Segal divides Soviet drinkers according to their drinking styles into four groups, based on their social belonging: the Soviet elite, the middle class, military personnel and last but not least, workers and peasants, or simply the "people." The Soviet elite, including the members of the Nomenclature, celebrities, party chiefs of any rank, academics, managers of institutes and factories, had access to the best brands, also foreign, since they were privileged to drink in best restaurants and shop in special stores.[159] As a rule, their binge drinking and alcoholism was hushed up. The middle class or Soviet intelligentsia, according to Segal, although not uniform in composition, were the modest drinkers, the so-called *komandirovki* (dispachings) however, gave them a possibility to binge drink. The army had to struggle

[155] Takala, *Veselie rusi*, 123-4.
[156] Segal, *Drunken Society*, 128-29.
[157] Quoted in Takala, Veselie rusi, 175-6.
[158] Ibid., 216.
[159] Segal, *Drunken Society*, 108-9.

heavily to stay sober since, according to Soviet researcher Mikhail Tsypkin, the most common violation of the Soviet military discipline was drinking.[160] Among the peasants and the working class drunkenness on the job was frequent, in spite of all the penalties and regulations introduced by the government. Additionally, there existed one general distinction between a "good" and "bad" drinker, where the first represented the image of a quiet drunkard who drank because of boredom, still obediently handed his salary over his wife, while the latter was depicted as a violent and aggressive.[161]

The border between alcohol use and alcohol abuse remained socially undefined in Soviet society. Few admitted their addiction and belief where ceremonial, ritual, and social consumption of alcohol, controlled by cultural and social norms, is generally regarded as "use," while loss of control over this consumption leading to adverse social and physical reactions is considered to be "abuse" and "addiction," which encouraged most abusers to label themselves as "moderate drinkers."[162] Officially, an individual was labeled an "alcoholic" only "when his behavior in an intoxicated state becomes aggressive, when he spends a significant portion of the family budget on alcoholic beverages and when his social functioning is disrupted."[163] But alcohol abuser could easily justify his binge through loyalty; one could proudly confirm that was celebrating one of many new holidays. Social life of Soviet Russia remained heavily intertwined with various cultural symbols inherited from the pre-revolutionary past. But it is difficult to point out the culprit- whether it were the fiscal interests of the tsarist and Soviet governments or psychological and social attitudes of Russian people that produced the special drinking patterns prevailing throughout the centuries. At least we know that the role alcohol played in all strata of Soviet Russian society can hardly be overestimated.

[160] Mikhail Tsypkin, "The Conscripts," In *The Soviet Union Today*, ed. J. Cracraft (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1983).
[161] Segal, *Drunken Society*, 126.
[162] Ibid., 522.
[163] Ibid., 217.

Chapter 3 State and Cinema

3.1 First Steps of the Most Important Art

In Russia, the showing and making of films started at the same time. However, at the end of the nineteenth century, it was the French companies that generated the biggest income on the Russian film market as domestic production and a rental system were non-existent. The Lumiere brothers introduced the cinema business by ordering the filming of the coronation ceremony of Nicholas II: this is known as the first sequence ever filmed in Russia.[164] Pathe and Gaumont established offices in Russia in 1904 and 1905 respectively, and started both selling foreign newsreels and making a series of tableaux about Russia.[165] Even if the industry itself was concentrated in Moscow and led largely by French, by 1909 the Russian empire could boast about twelve hundred theaters for its 108 million viewers.[166] The accumulated capital from the film rental business and the yearning for movies based on local subjects resulted in the first domestic experiments in 1908: *The Cossacks of the Don* and the first Russian narrative film, *Stenka Razin*. As seen from the themes, in order to appeal to audiences filmmakers turned to literary adaptations and historical events.

The situation remained basically unchanged until 1914, when the outbreak of World War I closed the frontiers and put an end to the foreign market dominance, thereby accelerating the growth of domestic industry. Almost immediately, filmmakers, sharing the general enthusiasm for the war, turned to production of patriotic films.[167] In addition, the audiences' demand for diversion and entertainment brought to life Russia's own "psychological" melodramas that, in turn, functioned as cornerstones for latter Soviet avant-garde cinema.[168] These melodrama films, unlike Western melodramas of the era, depicted suffering female protagonists and had prevailingly unhappy endings. In order to make them sellable to Western markets, domestic tragic endings were often duplicated with a happy ending for export purposes.[169]

Cinema as a new medium captured the Bolsheviks' interest not because of its aesthetic value but because of its propagandistic potential. The cinema's technological achievement could, according to Kenez, contribute to strengthening the linkage between

[164] L. M. Budiak and V. P. Mikhailov, *Adresa Moskovskogo kino* (Moskovskii rabochii: Moscow, 1987), 4-5.
[165] Jay Leyda, *Kino: A History of Russian and Soviet Film* (Collier Books: New York, 1960), 23-5.
[166] Budiak and Mikhailov, *Adresa Moskovskogo kino*, 65.
[167] Peter Kenez, *Cinema and Soviet Society, 1917- 1953* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 18-9.
[168] Ibid., 19.
[169] Ibid., 20-1. The mastermind behind women's melodramas was Evgenii Bauer. More about his art, see Birgit Beumers, *A History of Russian Cinema*, 22 -32.

modernity and Communism that the Bolshevik ideologists were emphasizing.[170] Taking into consideration the linguistic and cultural diversity of the population of Russia and the high level of illiteracy, cinema was definitely speaking "one universal language." Therefore, Lenin is believed to have considered cinema as the "the most important of all arts."[171] In fact, after the Revolution, film production was left in a chaotic situation as a lack of supplies and experienced personnel as well as non-existent distribution and exhibition apparatus, curtailed the development of the film industry.

Esentially, the Bolsheviks were forced to rebuild their film industry from the scratch.[172] First, in accordance with the nationalization wave of the War Communism period (1918-1921), they nationalized the cinema industry in 1919 after a monopoly over foreign export had been introduced the year before. Second, to support the development of the Soviet cinema industry and drag filmmakers away from "bourgeois" ideology, in 1919 the Bolsheviks initiated the first film school in the world (the State Film School).[173] Third, in order to spread the revolutionary message and the medium of cinema into the countryside, the Bolsheviks made use of the railway network. This made it possible to reach the masses without requiring substantial investments. The marriage of pre-revolutionary equipment and Soviet-made documentaries and newsreels began to serve the new ideology.[174]

3.2 Profit Making *a la Russe*

As the Civil War (1917-1922) deepened the economic crisis, the New Economic Policy (NEP) which returned many previously nationalized enterprises to the private sector and encouraged competition, had a huge impact on the revitalization of the domestic film production, even if certain restraints remained. Private Russian joint-stock film production companies got significant monetary injections from foreign investors as well as from the Workers' International Relief (WIR) that had been established on the Comintern's orders in Berlin in 1921.[175] Foreign imports were placed under the local distribution agent Goskino

[170] Kenez, *Cinema and Soviet Society*, 30.
[171] It was Anatolii Lunacharskii, the head of the Commissariat of Enlightenment, who has claimed Lenin saying these words. See, Richard Taylor and Ian Christie, eds., *The Film Factory: Russian and Soviet Cinema in Documents 1896–1939* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 57.
[172] Nicholas Reeves, *The Power of Film Propaganda: Myth or Reality?* (London and New York: Cassell, 1999), 58.
[173] Ibid., 54; Beumers, *History of Russian Cinema*, 40.
[174] Vance, Kepley Jr., "The Origins of Soviet Cinema: A Study in Industry Development," in *Inside the Film Factory: New Approaches to Russian and Soviet Cinema*, edited by Richard Taylor and Ian Christie, 67, London and New York: Routledge, 1991.
[175] On the importance of Workers International Relief, see Kepley "Origins of Soviet Cinema," 61-79.

(the State Committee of Cinematography) that hoped to accumulate capital by taxing both the foreign companies and the audience, while at the same time having a distribution monopoly. All gains were invested back into the domestic production ventures that made it possible to almost close the gap between revenues generated by Soviet producers and expenses deriving from import.[176] So, no matter how bourgeois, the Bolsheviks began to consider the film industry to be a possible profit-making venture.

In the 1920s five genres dominated Soviet cinema: contemporary melodrama, the revolution film, comedy, historical costume drama, and adaptation of literary classics.[177] In regards to the adaption of literary classics, few attempts succeeded in producing good box-office results as "Sovietized" films without turning them flat. All spoke in favour of importing movies.[178] However, in order to exploit foreign box office hits for not only economic but also ideological purposes, Lenin, for example, hoped that showing agitational newsreels before foreign movies would eliminate the "bourgeois" message of Hollywood films.[179] In addition, it was a time when the Soviets could already boast of their own talented group of young filmmakers who, although they stood out as unconventional regarding the content and form of their films, followed the principles of revolutionary ideology closely when they translated it into the medium of film.[180] Unfortunately, Soviet avant-garde filmmakers found themselves under the hail of domestic critics since the avant-garde films appeared to be incomprehensible to the audiences of the Soviet Union and received apathetic public reaction. Their films were revolutionary in their content but not in terms of audience interest and box-office revenues.[181]

NEP lasted until 1929 when it was replaced by the First Five Year Plan (1928-1932), accompanied by collectivization. The state's resources were at that time channeled into industrialization, and the monetary injections that the Soviet film industry needed in order to keep up with the birth of sound film were neglected. In fact, several ideological attacks against the film industry and filmmakers were often disguised in economic terms.[182] The new film policy was revealed in 1928 at the Party Conference on Cinema Affairs. Cinema was to

[176] Kepley. "Origins of Soviet Cinema," 70-77.
[177] Denise Youngblood, *Movies for the Masses: Popular Cinema and Soviet Society in the 1920s* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 32-3.
[178] Ibid., 72.
[179] Taylor and Christie, *Film Factory*, 57.
[180] Innovative work of Lev Kulsehov, Sergei Eizenshtein, Vsevolod Pudovkin, Dziga Vertov, and Aleksandr Dovzhenko broke with the orthodoxies of both narrative and documentary film.
[181] Youngblood, *Movies for the masses*, 18-9. Eizenshtein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) was truly an exception here, since it became a huge hit among Russian audiences.
[182] Ibid., 29.

support socialist construction, serve industrialization and collectivization and provide people with products that could be easily "understood by the masses" while leaving aside cultural pluralism of any kind. Moreover, the resolution stated that there was no fundamental conflict between "commerce" and "ideology."[183] These principles began to dictate the nature of the thematic planning of films and their content. As experimental cinema was not tolerated, the masses were shown melodramas which focused on public life while melodramas depicting people's private life were labeled "bourgeois." Public life melodramas proved to be not only monotonous but also impossible to export. Several film periodicals were closed or became the battleground for ideological criticism rather than for cinematic discussions.[184] Additionally, as everything regarded *inostranshchina* (foreign) was considered bourgeois and subverting Soviet ideology, the foreign film import became non-existent.[185] Youngblood calls it a "pyrrhic victory."[186]

This also meant that the cinema industry had to adapt itself to the command economy. The thematic plans, which were confirmed by the offices of Central Committee, were made annually and were expected to be followed by scriptwriters and directors. There were two thematic areas that were emphasized in every annual plan: historical and historical-revolutionary themes. However, the main problem regarding thematic planning was that, although most of the films might have corresponded to the political demands of the regime and defended the government policies and campaigns, they lacked mass appeal, which, in turn, meant monetary losses.[187] According to Kenez, the "demand for films accessible to the millions was not accompanied by a license to make films that millions would actually want to see."[188] True, the Soviet film industry had finally freed itself from the dependence on foreign products. Paradoxically, however, although the number of moviegoers increased in the 1930s the number of available films decreased. Domestic production could not keep up with the demand after foreign film import had been drastically cut.[189] For example, film production dropped from 128 films in 1930 to less than 30 three years later.[190]

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[183] Taylor and Christie, *Film Factory*, 205-15.
[184] Youngblood, *Movies for the Masses*, 33.
[185] On figures on imports, see Vance Kepley, Jr., and Betty Kepley, "Foreign Films on Soviet Screens, 1922-1931," *Quarterly Review of Film Studies* 4, no. 4 (1979).
[186] Youngblood, *Movies for the Masses*, 32.
[187] Jamie Miller, *Soviet Cinema: Politics and Persuasion under Stalin* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010), 91-104.
[188] Kenez, *Cinema and Soviet Society,* 104.
[189] Ibid., 133.
[190] Julian Graffy, "Cinema," in *Russian Cultural Studies*, edited by Catriona Kelly and David Shepherd (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 174.

In the second half of the 1930s, Soviet cinema was forced to put up with fierce purges and censorship interventions. In practice, it meant that the production of joyful musicals and comedies like *The Happy Guys* (1934)*, Volga Volga* (1938)*, The Shining Path* (1940) and *The Circus* (1936) were prioritized, resulting in enormous success among audiences. These films propagated the image of the Soviet people as happy individuals, although in any case they had to be cautious with interpretation. Those cineastes who preferred melodrama as a genre turned to the production of tractor and factory films, costume dramas based on adaptations of Russian literary classics or historical films about national heroes. A number of factory and tractor films made specifically for workers and peasants were probably the least "bourgeois" and most Soviet. These films had a clear narrative; villains (usually kulaks) and heroes were kept as "black and white" as possible. The most successful and most talked-about film of the era that was also representative of the prevalent revolutionary theme was *Chapaev* (1934). In fact, fascinated by the success of domestic film production and in an effort to speed up Soviet cinematic development, the leadership of Soiuzkino even planned to create a sort of "Soviet Hollywood," officially known as Kinogorod or "Cine-City" in Crimea, although this idea was never accomplished due to monetary reasons.[191] Money was being put into something more risky and dangerous--Stalin was preparing for the war.

3.3 From War to Thaw

During World War II the production of films continued as major studios were moved to Central Asia. Films became battlefields of struggle against domestic and foreign enemies, and films about Russian historical characters were expected to inject national heroism and patriotic behavior into the masses and mobilize people for the war effort.[192] Warfare was not only draining the country's resources but also exposing the life of the Western world to Soviet soldiers who entered Europe in pursuit of the retreating German army; this was seen as a danger. Following the conquest of Eastern Europe, filmmakers got a chance to use captured German equipment and coloured films stock.[193] However, the demand was still bigger than the supply. To cope with the shortage of movie theaters, the number of which had also fallen, the theaters continued to show the works of the late 1930s, but, paradoxically enough,

[191] Miller, *Soviet Cinema*, 35-7.
[192] *Ivan the Terrible (1945), Aleksandr Nevskii* (1938)*, Peter the First* (1937-8)*, A Great Citizen* (1937-9)*,* and *Kutuzov* (1944) are best examples of the production of the era.
[193] Kenez, *Cinema and Soviet Society,* 211.

many so-called trophy films (*trofeinye fil'my*)--movies captured by the Red Army--were used to meet the demand.[194] It is ironic how domestic directors who had to follow the ideological requirements never dared to experiment with themes pictured in the trophy films which were exploited both for accumulation of monetary resources and entertainment purposes. As soon as the film industry had managed to accumulate enough resources, the trophy films were first forbidden and the followed by the wave of anti-American films which represented the Cold War sentiment. However, post-war film production, due to strict censorship and lack of "safe" plots, did not manage to feed the cinematographic hunger of the masses, leading to a film famine.

The byproduct of the Cold War was a cultural program, the *zhdanovshchina*, launched in the years 1946-48 by Andrei Zhdanov who declared everything that smacked of Western influences in Soviet art to be "incorrect" and cosmopolitan. The anti-Western crusade meant denouncing those who had propagated the idea of a "world cinema" or who had publicly argued that "artistic standards applied independently of ideology."[195] In actual fact, the campaign aimed to divert attention from postwar harsh economic and social conditions and propagate Russian heroism and Stalin's cult. It led to a wrinkle- free and glossy portrayal of Soviet society which distorted historical facts.[196] Those artists and filmmakers who stood out as too unconventional or were experimenting with the "trial and error" method felt the sting of political censorship. In this way, for example, *A Great Life* (1946) and *Ivan the Terrible*, *Part II* (1946) got denounced.[197]

After the Stalinist "freeze" came Khrushchev's "thaw" which meant a relaxation in terms of strict ideology and a rapid rise in the annual production of feature-length films. One could argue that cinematographers now felt less culturally and politically constrained and explored areas and topics that had been previously hushed-up. However, even if the Thaw-era is by some film historians considered to have led Soviet cinema to an artistic renaissance, party directives could not be ignored.[198] Khrushchev's notoriously denouncing rhetoric towards Soviet avant-garde artists was well known, and despite the de-Stalinization that

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[194] Evgeni Dobrenko, "Late Stalinist Cinema and the Cold War: An Equation without Unknowns," in *The Modern Language Review* 98, no. 4 (2003): 929.
[195] Beumers, *History of Russian Cinema*, 107-8; Kenez, *Cinema and Soviet Society*, 222.
[196] Dmitrii Shlapentokh and Valdimir Shlapentokh. *Soviet Cinematography, 1918-1991: Ideological Conflicts and Social Reality* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1993), 123. *The Vow* (1946) and *Kuban Cossacks* (1949) are the best examples of the impact of *zhdanovshchina*.
[197] Kenez, *Cinema and Soviet Society,* 215-20. Eizenshtein's last film *Ivan the Terrible II* was not released before
1958.
[198] Anna Lawton, *Kinoglasnost: Soviet Cinema in Our Time* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 2.

followed the "Secret Speech" of 1956, his cultural views were quite traditional and dogmatic. Khrushchev's excessive experimentation in the economy and in the party led to his removal in 1964. As for cinematic experimentations, filmmakers began to explore the genre of science fiction (The *Amphibian Man* [1962]) and comedy (*Carnival Night* [1956]). First and foremost, the movies of the 1950s began to reflect the experience and influence of the Second World War.[199] The hero of the post-Stalinist period, while still molded after a model of cinematic socialist realism, was no longer a superhuman commander but a simple yet sincere and positive man who was fighting for the Soviet cause.[200] The Thaw era created a sort of peculiar situation where thirst for personal freedom and faith in the collective coexisted, also known as "the central paradox of the Thaw."[201]

3.4 The B*ytovoi* Brezhnev Era

The stagnation period, as the Brezhnev era is often called, slowed down the development of artistic freedom since it put the directors and their production under ideological pressure. In 1965, the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party revealed its expectations for the Union of Film Workers by calling for maintenance of ideological stability, clarity with regard to creative ideas and a cinema that could speak to the broadest of popular masses.[202] This view created a period of uncertainty and indecision where filmmakers, unwilling to give up the promising freedom of the Thaw-era, took refuge in the language of fables, allegories, and parables. But it also marked a tide of bans and disapprovals of a number of challenging scripts and films. The period of firm decisions meant a "flight away from contemporary problems," and a tacit return to the "theory of lack of conflicts" in the movies.[203]

The 1950s through the 1970s was known as the golden age of Soviet moviegoing, in reference to both high attendance numbers and expansion of film production. Attendance at the movies peaked in 1968, reaching nineteen annual visits per capita, and began to decline in

[199] Here, the best and most famous examples are *The Cranes are Flying* (1957), *The Ballad of the Soldier* (1959), and *Destiny of a Man* (1959). On war films in Russian cinema, see Denise J. Youngblood, *Russian War Films: On the Cinema Front, 1914-2005* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007).
[200] Antonin J. Liehm and Mira Liehm, *The Most Important Art: Soviet and Eastern European Film after 1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 207.
[201] Josephine Woll, *The Cranes Are Flying: The Film Companion* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2003), 14.
[202] Liehm and Liehm, *The Most Important Art*, 306.
[203] Ibid., 307.

the 1970s and 1980s with 16 and 14.6 annual visits, respectively.[204] However, at the end of 1970s, cinema became more domesticated due to the development of television technology, and this was the main reason behind plummeting box-office figures.[205] This led to discussions which questioned the correctness of the employment of a production model that first and foremost prioritized ideologically correct but bland movies over purely entertainment cinema. The preferred new model of production was based on self-financing (*khozraschet*), which meant focusing on crowd-pleasing productions only. Although a newly established studio, the Experimental Creative Studio, which employed this new agenda fulfilled all the expectations of this new model, this market-oriented experiment was put on hold. It has been argued that, however financially profitable, such a sink-and-swim operation was too capitalistic to take in. It created competition which separated the wheat from the chaff, thus giving profit to those who were more market-oriented and many less successful cineastes did not like it. In addition, this model pushed aside ideologically correct films and themes, a circumstance which again raised resentment among the Party officialdom.[206] However, despite attacks towards the Goskino administration about enforcing "an entertainment orientation on the film industry," the importance of the economic factor in the film industry could not be hushed up any longer.[207] In fact, the public taste in entertainment had already turned "bourgeois."[208] Even the commercial genres, labeled "popular," were expected to propagate socialist values.

The state's monetary support was crucial not only in terms of film production but also regarding film distribution, film critics and the personal career of each filmmaker. We have to remember that there did not exist any private financial funders or underground outlets until the end of the 1980s. The money flow into the studios was regulated exclusively by the fiscal plans and most people who worked in cinema earned regular salaries. However, it was possible to earn additional forms of compensation, so-called bonuses, by obtaining a high rating by the Goskino officialdom for "ideological-artistic quality" of the film. So, it was not meeting the fiscal plans and having good box-office figures that determined bonuses, it was the rating. In addition, the higher the rating the more film copies were printed. In fact, the

[204] Val Golovskoi, "Art and Propaganda in the Soviet Union, 1980-5," in *The Red Screen: Politics, Society, Art in Soviet Cinema*, edited by Anna Lawton (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 264.
[205] By 1977, 85 percent of Soviet households had TV sets. See Val S. Golovskoi and John Rimberg. *Behind the Soviet Screen: The Motion-Picture Industry in the USSR, 1972-1982* (Michigan: Ardis Publishers, 1986), 59.
[206] Kristin Roth-Ey, Moscow Prime Time: How the Soviet Union Built the Media Empire That Lost the Cultural Cold War (London: Cornell University Press, 2011), 57-62.
[207] George, Faraday, *Revolt of the Filmmakers: The Struggle for Artistic Autonomy and the Fall of the Soviet Film Industry* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 90.
[208] Anna Lawton, *Kinoglasnost*, 9.

most lucrative productions for cineastes in terms of monetary income were made over so-called commissioned themes (*zakaznye temy*); these were mostly historical-revolutionary and military-patriotic films.[209] In all, this business model functioned until the 1980s. In the 1970s, for example, only 15 percent of all Soviet films generated 80 percent of all ticket sales.[210] These were domestic box-office hits of "lower" ranks and some foreign movies, mainly Bollywood hits, which balanced the failures of costly and controversial thematic planning but not productions of high "ideological-artistic quality."

The most favoured genres of the 1960s and 1970s were comedy, adventure, and melodrama. The majority of Soviet audiences thumbed their nose at auteur cinema and liked it when productions offered them straightforward narratives, easily definable heroes and villains, and clear beginnings and ends. It has been argued that Soviet film audiences expected "contemporary entertainment- a mix of surprising novelty and comforting familiarity."[211] These were historical and monumental films, like the four-part *War and Peace* (1967- 1971), based on literary classics, which represented an ideologically and artistically secure way of moviemaking.[212] While films with World War II themes faced decrease, the slapstick comedies of the 1960s became new top-grossing movies. Additionally, a newcomer was the *bytovoi* or "slice-of-life" film that covered several genres, from comedy to melodrama, exploring the everyday lives and relations of individuals within contemporary society.[213] In El'dar Riazanov's productions, for example, the themes of crime, corruption, irony and the monotony of both architectural and social conformity were masterfully intertwined into love stories and comedies[214] Yet, numerous films were produced which did not gain any special audience recognition besides the fact that they fulfilled the thematic plan.

As already mentioned, the commercial considerations of 1970s became more and more prevailing and this in turn resulted in the production of films in the light genres. Among film historians, the commercial films were known as "grey" films, both from an aesthetic and political point of view.[215] It has even been argued that the 1970s proved to be of little significance to Soviet film art since there did not arise any clearly defined "schools" and all

[209] Faraday, *Revolt of the Filmmakers*, 59; Roth-Ey, *Moscow Prime Time*, 50-2.
[210] Golovskoi and Rimberg. *Behind the Soviet Screen*, 60.
[211] Ibid., 61, 88.
[212] *War and Peace* is considered the most expensive film ever made in the Soviet Union.
[213] The term was first used by Maia Turovskaia, "Pochemu zritel' khodit v kino," in *Zhanry kino*, ed. by V. Fomin (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1979).
[214] Riazanov's best-known are *The Irony of Fate* (1975), Office Romance (1977), *Garage* (1979), and *Station for Two* (1982).
[215] Anna Lawton, *Kinoglasnost*, 11.

auteur trends became suppressed by the governmental machine, but such generalizations are not entirely accurate.[216] The prevailing simple film narrative, ideology and stereotypes were challenged by highly metaphorical films, representatives of the so-called "poetic school," where films resembled a poem and the narrative logic was replaced by analogical images.[217] Andrei Tarkovski (*Mirror* [1975], *Stalker* [1980]) and Vasily Shukshin (*The Red Snowball Tree* [1974]) were representatives of this genre. Not surprisingly, Soviet auteur cinema became associated with the dissident movement, since its complex visual metaphors in the place of plain narratives were too unorthodox for their time. Moreover, the filmmakers' reactions against stagnation were not hidden but manifested as public resistance. It has been argued that most cineastes of the 1960s and 1970s were dissident in thought although conformist in behavior.[218] It should be considered though that these were the representatives of auteur cinema who were classified as "difficult" or "dissident" by authorities as they had rejected orthodox narrative in favour of structural experiments and were not making "movies for the masses."[219] Their films were either shelved or had limited circulation.

The wave of banned films arrived in 1967 with the onset of Stagnation.[220] Paradoxically, these were "dissident" filmmakers, including Tarkovski and Konchalovski, who shaped the image of Soviet cinema abroad and gained international applause while the highest grossing films of their Soviet countrymen who stayed at home still remain unknown outside the Russia and former Soviet Union.

3.5 Pessimistic Perestroika

With the Gorbachev era and his glasnost directives, filmmakers started to test the limits of more relaxed ideology. At the 27th Party Congress in 1986, Gorbachev called for openness and transparency and this led to a restructuring of the whole society. First, many previously shelved films were released during glasnost.[221] Second, in addition to a general loosening of control over expressions and in line with *perestroika*, Soviet cineastes were expected to change their economic thinking. In 1986, the Fifth Congress of the Filmmakers'

[216] Golovskoi and Rimberg. *Behind the Soviet Screen*, 132.
[217] Lawton, *Kinoglasnost*, 32.
[218] Shlapentokh and Shlapentokh. *Soviet Cinematography*, 149.
[219] Beumers, *History of Russian Cinema*, 146.
[220] Famous directors either emigrated, as it happened in case of Andrei Tarkovski and Andrei Konchalovski, or were forced to abandon the movie industry, like Aleksandr Askol'dov.
[221] Most notable among them were Muratova's *Brief Encounters* (1968), Konchalovski's *Asya's Happiness* (1966), and Askoldov's *Commissar* (1965).

Union replaced the old bureaucratic leadership with new progressive leaders who were filmmakers themselves. In the same year, Goskino lost its decision-making power over production, distribution, and the right to exercise ideological and financial control. Now, all studios were licensed to plan and manage their own productions, free from censorship, and were expected to move towards self-financing.[222] The changes in the politics of film, especially budget freedom (*khozraschet)*, were a logical result of the Central Committee's programme of economic reforms which aimed to accelerate productivity (*uskorenie*) through decentralization of management. Even if the new policy gave the cineastes greater freedom, however, it did not guarantee their survival. Decentralization of the distribution network gave cinemas a right to choose which films they wanted to screen. Unfortunately, this gave a head start to foreign films which were preferred ahead of domestic production. Although all previously banned films were unshelved, most of them were outdated and did not offer enough excitement to the masses who at last were allowed to taste the forbidden fruits of western cinema. In fact, several foreign-Soviet co-productions did not manage to make enough profit and cover the needs of the market. The re-market system soon turned out to be quite controversial and demanding for many Soviet filmmakers, since it gradually replaced the good old censorship with new influential limiting factor--money.

In addition, the expected renaissance of free Soviet film was weak, especially in the eyes of domestic critics. Soviet cineastes themselves assessed their production rather critically claiming that the majority of even the best films offered only "artistic journalism."[223] While they embodied "a true-to-life depiction of problems and conflicts, believable characters, realistic settings, and more or less decent acting," they did not serve the art itself.[224] The critics came up with the term *chernukha*, which means "painted in dark colours" but also hints at poor quality and the exploitation of the subject for commercial purposes.[225] Indeed, in the late 1980s, despite the triumph of television, the average Russian visited the cinema fourteen times a year which was the world's highest movie-going figure.[226] It was clear that Soviet cineastes did not want to make mainstream movies as they had been forced to do for years, but in order to make auteur films they needed financial resources. The foreign video boom and the growing number of private video salons did not help either.[227]

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[222] Lawton, *Kinoglasnost*, 53-60.
[223] Director Aleksei German's words are quoted in Golovskoi, Art and Propaganda in the Soviet Union, 272.
[224] Ibid.
[225] Lawton, *Kinoglasnost*, 206.
[226] *Ekspert*, November 10, 1997.
[227] See Lawton, *Kinoglasnost*, 99-107.

People were hungry for western films which, with their shiny superheroes and happy ends, provided promising bright alternatives to the overall era of gloomy deficiency. Paradoxically, the free market ideology and missing censorship resulted in dark Soviet films that represented pessimistic predictions about the future, although filmmakers of the era did not intend to give moral or spiritual guidance. They became fascinated with the possibility of showing what the actual socialist realism and "the highest level of communism" looked like. When Goskino was eventually dissolved in 1992, there emerged more than five hundred private moviemaking firms and the state support was withdrawn.[228] Once again, like in 1928, Russian cineastes were forced to learn to swim but, this time, in the other direction.

3.6 The Soviet Cinematic Troika: Entertainment, Ideology, and Censorship

3.6.1 Entertainment as Enlightenment

When the film industry was nationalized and placed under the control of the Commissariat of Enlightenment, moving picture was named as a "book for illiterate."[229] Lev Trotskii, for example, saw cinema as a weapon, the best instrument of propaganda, which does not require its audience to be literate, and moreover, could be made into a possible resource of revenue. Moreover, he considered cinema the most important weapon for combating both the Church and alcoholism, which he thought to be the biggest hinders to the construction of a new socialist order. Thus, for Trotskii, the cinema, with its moving pictures and theatrical images, would not only be a new propaganda tool with economic significance, but because of its entertaining value it would also function as a substitute for the church and tavern.[230] Lenin's wish of "cinefication" of the country (*kinofikatsiia strany*) was mainly led by the ideas of enlightenment and education rather than entertainment. For him, *agitka* or "a little agitational piece," propaganda film, was the easiest and quickest option for reaching the masses in war and deteriorating economic circumstances. *Agitiki* were shown all over the country in *agitpunkty* (agitational centers), and if needed, transported to the corners of the country with the help of *agit*-trains. However, even Lenin understood that without entertainment he would not attract audiences. Therefore, so-called "Leninist proportion"

[228] Shlapentokh and Shlapentokh, *Soviet Cinematography*, 210.
[229] Quoted in Youngblood, *Movies for the Masses*, 36.
[230] Lev Trotskii, "Vodka, the Church, and the Cinema," *Pravda*, July 15, 1923. http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/women/life/23_07_12.htm, last accessed October 10, 2012.

began to guide Soviet film production, establishing the production of 75 percent entertainment to 25 percent propaganda films.[231]

Neither Lenin nor Trotskii provided clear guidance regarding interpretation of art within socialism; hence it gave free reign to their followers to interpret their own concepts. When cinema started to reveal its commercial potential, the debate among the Party officials and cineastes encompassed the question of purpose of cinema. Should fit unction for enlightenment purposes and thus serve ideology, for entertainment purposes and support regime economically, or do both--be ideologically correct but still commercially successful?[232] One possibility was to imitate the Western blockbusters and produce low-budget films that would provide quick return of capital. In this way, the film industry could exploit *kassovye* (cash) films in order to finance *klassovye* (class) films.[233] Was it possible though? According to Soviet authorities there was no fundamental conflict between "commerce" and "ideology."[234] For Soviet filmmakers, however, in most cases it became a question of balancing entertainment and ideology in the films for the sake of escaping the trimming scissors of censorship.

3.6.2 Ideology of Socialist Realism

The biggest ideological constraint which defined the arts and cultural production in the Soviet Union was the ideology of Socialist Realism. The idea of Socialist Realism was first coined by Andrei Zhdanov and imposed on all artists in 1934 at the First Congress of Soviet Writers. The definition says: "Socialist realism is the basic method of Soviet literature and literary criticism. It demands of the artist the truthful, historically concrete representation of reality in its revolutionary development. Moreover, the truthfulness and historical concreteness of the artistic representation of reality must be linked with the task of ideological transformation and education of workers in the spirit of socialism."[235] The three canons that began to characterize the new ideology--socialist idea (*ideinost'*), accessibility

[231] Beumers, *History of Russia Cinema*, 41.
[232] Youngblood, *Movies for the Masses*, 39-47.
[233] Richard, Taylor, "Ideology as Mass Entertainment: Boris Shumyatsky and Soviet Cinema in the 1930s," in *Inside the Film Factory: New Approaches to Russian and Soviet Cinema*, edited by Richard Taylor and Ian Christie, 198. London and New York: Routledge, 1991.
[234] Taylor and Christie, *Film Factory*, 208-15.
[235] Abram Tertz, *On Socialist Realism* (Pantheon, New York, 1960), 24.

(*narodnost'*), and Party loyalty (*partiinost'*) led to unrealistic teleological representation of history and future, resulting in films with utopian narratives.[236]

The doctrine of Socialist Realism expected the Soviet cineastes to produce films with a polished picture of ideal socialist society. The idea was, as Kenez argues, to give the audiences the impression that there was no other way to look at the world than the one represented by the ideology, while other ways of perceiving the world were considered too radical.[237] Miller argues that Soviet films of the 1930s were expected to not only "politically educate the mass audience, but to transfer a large amount political responsibility for the regime's shortcomings on to the ordinary person" that, in turn, contributed to an "excessive politicization of Soviet cinema."[238] Thus, film protagonists who struggled against the hardships imposed by bureaucracy and nature or unmasked the hidden enemy were directly advancing to the "socialist construction" stage. It has been argued that even musicals, Stalinist blockbusters of the 1930s, did not carry less propaganda and ideological potential that the historical- revolutionary films of the era.[239]

After Stalin's death, the discussion went on about the possible interpretation of Soviet Realism. The Thaw (*ottepel'*) is considered to have revived the Soviet film industry, as cineastes were allowed to depict ordinary people and give heros human values and faces. However, even in the 1950s, the ideological-propagandistic concept of film art and the pedagogical role of film art of cinematography remained unchanged while occasional, and usually suppressed, artistic changes were interpreted mainly as different "pedagogical concepts."[240] The main change in ideological rhetoric came in the mid-1970s, when economic consideration had won over ideological ones since, with annual ticket sales of 4.2 billion, "commercial films" were suddenly seen in more favourable light.[241] In addition, it was an era when Soviet cinema showed a more diversified range of genres, although technologically the quality of the films remained low. Golovskoi argues that such a change in ideological rhetoric was possible due to both the elevated production of documentaries and the spread of television which freed cinema from being the only vehicle for ideological message.[242] In fact, it was not before 1986 when Soviet cineastes advocated for abolishing censorship and for

[236] Beumers, *History of Russian Cinema*, 78; Kenez, *Cinema and Soviet Society*, 157-8.
[237] Kenez, *Cinema and Soviet Society*, 158-9.
[238] Miller, *Soviet Cinema*, 154, 177.
[239] Dobrenko, "Late Stalinist Cinema," 929.
[240] Liehm and Liehm, *The Most Important Art*, 203.
[241] Golovskoi, "Art and Propaganda in the Soviet Union," 265.
[242] Ibid., 264-65.

introducing the principle of economic stimulation; this was the time when the tenets of Socialist Realism were officially abandoned.

3.6.3 Censorship and Its Impact

Soviet censorship was a by-product of Soviet ideology. It was purely Soviet "invention" and resembled the overall Soviet bureaucracy--almighty and subjective. Moreover, Youngblood argues that "because of politicization of culture, filmmakers were not only subject to the censorship restraints familiar to all national cinemas, but also to a microcosmic analysis and direction of their activities from 'outsiders' and self-proclaimed 'experts.'"[243] In Tsarist Russia, according to Kenez, the government did not intervene in the business of making the films, for it did not consider the film industry worth of support. Even if church and some local authorities criticized the usage of some biblical topics or forbade depiction of the members of the royal family, these were the filmmakers, after all, who according to audiences' demand determined the character of the films. All in all, films were not perceived as a threat to the existing political and social order.[244] Similar developments continued in the beginning of the 1920s. As anticipated, anti-Soviet and pornographic films were not tolerated, but ordinary entertainment films were still not perceived as a source of danger.[245] The first censorship body devoted to controlling Soviet films was the State Repertoire Committee established in 1923; however, a strong-handed and elaborate censorship regime was implemented from 1928 onwards.[246]

Bringing a movie to the screen involved dealing with censorship that was as much a bureaucratic-political process as an artistic one. The censorship had rather broad guidelines that had been worked out as early as in 1934 which allowed the elimination of films which contained agitation and propaganda against the Soviet Union, ideological errors, pornography, national tendencies among ethnic minorities, religious fanaticism, mysticism, revealed government secrets, and were inartistic.[247] Such broad guidelines gave censorship and various non-expert pressure groups free reign in terms of the (mis)interpretation of even the smallest aspects regarding film content. That made making and censoring the film not

[243] Youngblood, *Movies for the Masses*, 71.
[244] Kenez, *Cinema and Soviet Society*, 17.
[245] Ibid., 31.
[246] Miller, *Soviet Cinema*, 53-70. Miller gives also very thorough overview of bureaucratic structure of organizations and commissions who were liable for censoring Soviet movies.
[247] Golovskoi and Rimberg, *Behind the Soviet Screen*, 32.

only time-consuming, but also a money-wasting venture since a large number of completed films in the 1930s and later remained unreleased and were considered "ideological rejects" (*ideologicheskii brak*) that cost the state millions.[248]

When we talk about bureaucratic networks and Party officialdom, there existed numerous representatives and "experts" of various social organizations who also had the right to make a proposition to "trim" the script or final product.[249] However, the importance of those individuals who actually ran the film industry at the political level and took all decisions regarding the overall themes is, according to Taylor, often overlooked by film historians.[250] Stalin himself, for example, although a non-expert, was interested in cinema and was known for having recommended themes, suggested changes, reviewed scripts, and altered titles.[251] This explains his nickname: the Spectator.

Of course, these regulations became more and more overlooked in the second half of the 1980s. Before that, however, breaking entirely with the stereotypical Socialist Realism view was not tolerated. Those cineastes, artists and singers who dared to address the taboo issues like alcoholism and drugs (Vladimir Vysotskii) were banned. It resulted in an atmosphere of passivity and pressure where the only way to create something meaningful was to employ metaphors or an Aesopian style, which encoded hidden references in order to escape from censorship. For example, Leonid Gurevich, a great documentary filmmaker, recalls that Soviet filmmakers were used to living by the principle of reading everything between the lines. To retain the integrity of their films even after minimum three-level censorship apparatus (the studio director, Goskino, and the Central Committee of Communist Party),[252] cineastes would include some nonsense taboos hoping that these would distract the censors and keep other substantial elements in the film safe. Such a method was also called "adding white dogs" in a film.[253] However, it has also been claimed that wrestling with the

[248] Kenez, *Cinema and Soviet Society*, 140-3.
[249] Tense, and in places unbelivable stories regarding Soviet film censorship can be read in Kristin Roth- Ey, *Moscow Prime Time*, 30-6; Katherine Eaton, *Daily Life in the Soviet Union* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004), 245-247. It has been claimed that even shock-worker Aleksei Stakhanov's suggestions were forced on the filmmakers. See Shlapentokh and Shlapentokh. *Soviet Cinematography*, 100.
[250] Taylor, "Ideology as Mass Entertainment," 194.
[251] Stalin's love for movies and his personal influence on moviemaking is also discussed in Shlapentokh and Shlapentokh. *Soviet Cinematography*, 75-81; and in Miller, *Soviet Cinema*, 63-6.
[252] There were actually two more national institutions which could intervene. On hierarchical system of film censorship, see more Faraday, *Revolt of the Filmmakers*, 63-6.
[253] Louis, Menashe, *Moscow Believes in Tears: Russians and Their Movies* (Washington, DC: New Academia Publishing, 2010), 368. So-called "dog's method" meant that the film had to have at least one short, but ideologically mysterious and politically suspicious scene, which would be eliminated in any case, and thus it would draw attention away from other small nuances. This method, for example, basically "saved" the famous comedy by Leonid Gaidai *The Brilliant Arm* (1968) from more cropping.

censors created an ensemble of films with colourful inner-life.[254] Eldar Riazanov, a famous director, has himself admitted that the corrections could very often turn out to benefit the picture.[255]

[254] Menashe, *Moscow Believes in Tears*, 197.
[255] Golovskoi and Rimberg. *Behind the Soviet Screen*, 117-18.

Chapter 4 Exploring Alcohol Consumption in Soviet Movies

Dealing with socialist reality, both living in it and representing it, can be claimed to be the biggest issue for the Soviet film cineastes since the beginning of the film industry. Numerous social problems did not disappear with the fall of Tsar and rise of Communism, but quite the opposite, deepened. When taking into consideration the historical and social background of alcohol production and the consumption pattern introduced in Chapter 2, one would think that cineastes had plenty of themes for their films. However, in accordance with Chapter 3 which reveals the ideological constraints and demands set for the film industry, the situation was quite different. Even if it has been claimed that the dominant mode of Soviet film criticism became "social problem writing," it ignored the themes and issues that could in any way harm the state's or critic's reputation.[256] Therefore one can only agree with Menashe who argues that "certain features of Soviet society were either lacquered heavily, or bypassed completely."[257]

In contrast to alcoholism and the alcoholic protagonist, alcohol consumption was often portrayed. This was done so frequently and skillfully that Soviet films definitely confirmed the stereotype that identified drinking as Russia's national pastime. In fact, in most cases, Soviet filmmakers exploited the prevailing but vague idea of cultured drinking (*kul'turnoe pit'e*) which meant moderation in alcohol consumption and blurred the line between "use" and "abuse." Although scenes and episodes with alcohol consumption were present in all film genres, except children's films, two genres in particular appealed to cineastes more than others--comedies and melodramas, also known as *bytovye* films. These genres, although aesthetically not so notable in the eyes of the film critics, proved to be especially valuable in terms of revealing social problems at a time when excessive alcohol consumption was concealed in official data. In order to pass through the censorship directors turned to metaphors, allusions, oblique references and suggestive juxtapositions. This aesthetic code, known as "Aesopian language," provided the cineastes with an indirect tool of communication and enabled audiences to read between the lines and images.[258] In places, it led to a situation where harmless entertainment turned out to be social criticism, and instead

[256] Michael Brashinskii and Andrew Horton, eds., *Russian Critics on the Cinema of Glasnost* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 3.
[257] Menashe, *Moscow Believes in Tears*, xiv.
[258] Anna Lawton, *Kinoglasnost: Soviet Cinema in Our Time (*New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 50-51. The term derives from the Greek fable slave-writer Aesop, who, in order to challenge the establishment, was forced to use allegory or indirect statements.

of the general impression of *vospitanie* (education) that films were supposed to give, ideology was ironically mocked.

4.1 Drinking Occasions

In fact, the most highly represented scenes in Soviet film in terms of alcohol consumption are those that depict drinking for establishing new and warming up old acquaintances and friendships (*Autumn Marathon* [1979], *100 Grams for Courage* [1976], *The Diamond Arm* [1968]). Soviet cineastes were really making use of this tradition as it is present basically in all film genres at all times, especially in comedies. When drinking, people of different generations and background are made to speak the "same language," and very often the initial tense attitude changes. Even when travelling, drinking is a must, especially on long distance trains. Vodka and alcoholic beverages work as "ice-breakers," offering a feeling of fraternization (*Kinfolk* [1983], *Elder Son* [1975]). We are often shown the starting time of such "bonding scenes" when the bottles are unopened, and then the outcome which depicts merry characters with empty or half-full bottles in the background (*Give Me the Complaint Book* [1964], *The Diamond Arm* [1968], *Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears* [1979]). However, offering a drink which initially is considered to be a polite social custom indicating the politeness of a host is also portrayed as imposed tradition that not only clashes with a guest's principles but which also has more fatal consequences. *100 Grams for Courage* (1976), a satirical temperance movie made up of three separate segments, presents us with one example. We learn that however big the guest's reluctance to drink is and the however severe the host's medical condition which prevents him from drinking any strong alcohol, they do it anyway since they both feel obliged to follow the social custom--one loses the opportunity to defend his dissertation while the other loses his life. Also, in the 1980s, when filmmakers could turn to more open social criticism, we learn that not all scenes where people drink for a long-awaited encounter carry positive implications. In the drama *Intergirl* (1989), a nurse-turned-prostitute named Tatiana looks up her father in order to have him sign the approval of her marriage to a foreigner who grants her a one way ticket to the Western world. In the company of her father who left his family long time ago, Tatiana is forcing herself to take a sip of moonshine, and by this, celebrate their meeting and convey good feelings to her father not for the sake of good old times, but for the sake of the new prosperous life.

Thus, drink is also portrayed as a helpful negotiation element and a universal "lubricant" in desperate situations where one of the characters refuses to change his or her opinion (*Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears* [1979]). In *Beware of the Car* (1966), for example, a policeman is able to find out about the noble cause behind the car thefts accomplished by the protagonist Yuri Detochkin only as a result of a drinking binge which loosens Detochkin's tongue. Hence, excessive alcohol consumption can change the course of action in the film and help the protagonist to find the love of his life. This happens in *The Irony of Fate, or Enjoy Your Bath!* (1975) where a very drunk Zhenia meets Galia after a New Year's Eve celebration with his friends. He catches a plane to Leningrad instead of his friend and is drawn into a romantic encounter. Additionally, it happened that cineastes showed how alcohol was used as a *modus operandi* in Soviet everyday life. In fact, vodka was used as a bribe and device for controlling rural elections already in the nineteenth century.[259] *Give Me the Complaint Book* (1964) contains a scene from a restaurant where a visitor orders for three people two liters of vodka, nine beers and the best snacks and explains the reason for such lavish order by saying, "The boss will be joining us."

Equally common drinking occasions in the films are also celebrations. Drink accompanies the festivities of New Year's Eve (*The Carnival Night* [1956], *The Irony of Fate* [1975]), weddings (*The Hostel Is Provided for the Singles* [1983], *I Step Through Moscow* [1963]) and sending a young man off to war or military service (*The Cranes Are Flying* [1957], *Kinfolk* [1983], *Love and Doves* [1984]). Glasses are even raised when celebrating the overfulfillment of the annual plan (*100 Grams for Courage* [1976]). As religion was not favored in Soviet Russia, cinematic scenes showing alcohol consumption directly relating to religious holidays were scarce. However, some religious allusions can be found; when in *Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears* (1979) the protagonist Katia gives birth to a child out of wedlock at the end of the 1950s, her friends celebrate childbirth with a drink saying "it's a holy thing to drink for a child." Paradoxically, the Khrushchev era when the narrative takes place was known for its anti-religious campaign, but here the phrase refers to the rural origin of the characters.

More usual were references to the traditional drinking culture. One vivid example comes from the initially banned film *Asya's Happiness* (1967) where the kolkhoz workers drink and eat at the end of the workday on the field to celebrate the completed job. In line with the old tradition of so-called work parties (*pomoch*), all participants, both very young

[259] Christian and Smith, *Bread and Salt,* 322.

and elderly, gather around the table that is set outside under the blue sky between the golden corn fields.

Figure 1. Drinking between the cornfields after hard working day. Scene from *Asya's Happiness* (1967). The shot is preceded by folksy rhyming, known as *priskazka*:

Let us brothers drink here and now
In the underworld we won't
But if there you are offered, too
Let us brothers drink both here and there[260]

It happened that filmmakers mocked the over-the-top celebrating occasions of Soviet individuals who were depicted as utilizing every possible holiday and incident as an occasion for raising a glass. On the one hand, in a state where deficiencies of consumer goods were common and buying cars and apartments did not depend so much on money as on acquaintances and the regimented queuing system, celebrating apartment ownership should not come as a surprise (*September Vacation* [1979]). On the other hand, however, there are scenes that besides laughter might have given the audience the hint of a hidden alcoholism

[260] Выпьем братцы пока тут/ На том свете не дадут / Ну а если там дадут/ Выпьем братцы там и тут.

problem, as when one character explains his drinking by celebrating the conquest of the Bastille (*Love and Doves* [1984]).

The portrayal of drinking for medicinal purposes embodies ironic references as well. For example, in restaurants the noisy customers are served vodka "*dlia spakoistva*" which in the waitress's jargon means keeping customers quiet and from making fuss (*Give Me the Complaint Book* [1964]). Or, when celebrating New Year's Eve in *The Irony of Fate* (1975), Zhenia is persuaded to drink by his friends who explain that as a doctor he has a right to do it as he drinks "to health"! However, we can also find moderate examples that not only justify the Russian toast "*Na zdorov'e!"* which can be translated "to (your) health," but also portray and propagate the image of abstinent Soviet individual. In the Soviet blockbuster *The Diamond Arm* (1968), the protagonist Semen agrees to drink foreign brandy offered by the captain as it "calms your nerve system and soothes arteries," and not because he is eager to taste expensive and unattainable drink.

Consuming alcoholic beverages in Soviet films does not only refer to celebrations and social etiquette. One essential reason for drinking is also drinking for courage or for showing courage. These scenes are directly connected to manifestations of masculinity of the character, but we can also find in them traces of national pride. When in *Asya's Happiness* (1967) an adolescent kolkhoz worker drinks vodka with his hands behind his back and holding the glass only with his teeth, he is trying to impress a girl sitting opposite him. However, he also earns encouraging surprise calls from his older fellow peers affirming his maturity. In a war-drama *Destiny of a Man* (1959), we find the scene when the imprisoned Russian soldier Sokolov, played by the famous actor Sergei Bondarchuk, escapes execution by draining three drinking glasses of vodka in a row and refusing the offered snacks (*zakuski*). A Nazi officer is so impressed that he cancels his execution and calls him "a real Russian soldier."

Figure 2. Scene from *Destiny of a Man* (1959). Sokolov: "I do not take a bite after the first glass."

This well-known and widely cited scene portrays the courage and stamina of a Russian man and Solokov stands out as the epitome of an unshakeable Russian national character. However, drinking for the sake of courage is also satirically portrayed as a risky undertaking which can destroy more than build up. *100 Grams for Courage* (1976) portrays a sincere, educated and non-drinking bachelor who, in order to build up courage and suppress his nervousness before his approaching first date, is provoked by his friend's suggestion to consume one hundred grams of hard liqueur. In the course of action, a hundred grams grows to bottles and our protagonist ends up in sobering up station.

Naturally, several films present various psychological reasons for (binge) drinking. We learn that some characters drink in order to cope with, or "medicate," emotional problems. In *The White Sun of the Desert* (1970), Paul Vereschagin, a former Tsar's customs official, drinks because of his isolation and grief since life is tedious and lonely compared to the military campaigns of his glory days. The Civil War has left him idle. The portrayal of Vereschagin's alcohol consumption and his alcohol supplies stand in stark contrast to the water supplies and water consumption in the desert where the movie takes place. In this movie, one can find more occasions with alcohol consumption than scenes with drinking water, which emphasizes the profoundness of Vereschagin's sadness.

In fact, longing and sorrow can be a cause for drinking both for men and women, especially taking into consideration that women were rarely alcohol-abusing in Soviet films.

In *Intergirl* (1989) Tatiana turns to the bottle when she longs for contact with her home and her mother and is not able to deal with her past as a prostitute that starts haunting her new married life in Sweden. Unexpected binge drinking of Diocletian-citing Goga in *Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears* (1979) is a result of his lost masculinity when he learns that his girlfriend, the protagonist Katia, is a factory director and earns more than he does. Goga's depression is put to an end by Nikolai who offers him some guidance. In such cases, sharing a bottle means sharing a problem. Similarly, a failed career and the inability to find a new meaning in life leads Igor Bragin, a protagonist in *Love by Request* (1983), to find consolation in the bottle.

Naturally, there are plenty of scenes which juxtapose and intertwine drinking and habitual alcohol abuse with the increasing triviality and dullness of everyday life that questions the credibility of the imaginary and happy façade of the ruling regime (*September Vacation* [1979], *Little Vera* [1989]). It has been argued that even *gulianie*--"walking," a notion which comes from folklore and later refers to jovial wandering from restaurant to restaurant--carries "definite emotional overtones of 'escape from routine.'"[261] In these cases, people consume alcohol in order to substitute the missing *prazdnik v dushe* (celebration in one's heart) to use the words of the protagonist and former convict Egor in the film *The Red Snowball Tree* (1973).

[261] Jeremy R Azrael, "Notes on Soviet Urban Attitudes toward Leisure," *Social Problems* 9, no. 1 (1961): 70.

Figure 3. Goga and Nikolai sharing a problem. From *Moscow Does not Believe in Tears* (1979).

4.2 Substance and Location

In Soviet movies the metaphoric qualities of alcohol, for example the phallic shape of the bottle, were never as essential as the intriguing cultural and social codes written into the alcoholic substance and the place where it was consumed. Alcohol beverages were consumed mostly at home and at various eating or drinking places. Soviet restaurants functioned always as drinking establishments, especially during the time when the government suppressed the development of other drinking facilities; however, a good restaurant was beyond the means of most people. According to Azrael, in a Soviet restaurant "a man's table becomes his castle, a center where he can gather with his small group of carefully selected and trusted friends free from the omnipresent "stranger" and depressing surroundings."[262] However, most people enjoyed the services of canteens and stand-up bars. Since Soviet homes, especially in the cities, were most often small and overcrowded *kommunalkas* (communal apartments), it has been argued that this literally pushed people towards the drinking community of the beer hall.[263]

As there were various reasons and occasions behind alcohol consumption, we see drinking at the airport (*Give Me the Complaint Book* [1964]), in trains (*Kinfolk* [1981]) and

[262] Azrael, "Notes on Soviet Urban Attitudes toward Leisure," 73.
[263] Ibid.

railway stations (*The Station for Two* [1982]). Similarly, drinking places and alcoholic beverages encompass various allusions both to the nature of the celebration and the social status of the drinker. In other words, there existed a connection between the substance and the place which, in turn, fed various (societal) clichés.

Figure 4. Drinking in the train. Scene from *Kinfolk* (1983).

Beer was the most accessible of all alcoholic beverages and most common were the brands Zhigulevskoe and Leningradskoe. Although beer was almost exclusively a male drink consumed in a pub or *pivnushka*, drinking beer was almost never shown as a vice; however it happened that beer was mixed with vodka. In bars, such cocktails were known as *firmennoe* (house specialty) or *ersh*. In *Beware of the Car* (1966), the house specialty is served to two visitors who are considered inspectors counting on their quicker intoxication. The Soviet party drink, however, was definitely not a glass of wine or champagne, but something stronger, although champagne indisputably had its place at weddings and on New Year's Eve (*Carnival night* [1956], *Irony of Fate* [1975]). Other popular beverages were brandy and vodka-based liqueurs such as *nalivki* and *nastoiki* which were flavoured with fruits, berries or herbs.[264] Since certain brands were difficult to obtain, the most expensive brands carried negative connotations referring to possible blat, corruption, or Western influence. When the protagonist Detochkin and his friend, a police inspector Podberezovikov, head to a bar to drink beer in *Beware of the Car* (1966), the villain of the movie, Dima Semitsvetov, played

[264] See also Segal, *Drunken Society*, 9.

by Andrei Mironov, parties with the best brands and dances a western twist. Later we learn that Semitsvetov has stolen money from the state in order to enjoy all this lavish lifestyle. Mironov portrays also another dandyish character and swindler Gennadii Kozodoev or Gesha in *The Diamond Arm* (1968) who treats his hangover by drinking champagne. While Gesha knows how to behave and what to order in the fancy restaurant The Weeping Willow, Semen, the protagonist of the movie and a representative of the working class, holds a low profile and orders beer. When Semen is finally drunk, his observant neighbours see it as a result of the "westernization" provoked by his trip abroad.

Figure 5. Scene from *The Diamond Arm* (1968).
Gesha: "Ksenia, do you respect me?"

However, the most universal drink was unquestionably vodka. There were many brands of vodka, such as Moskovskaia Osobaia, Sibirskaia, Yubileinaia and Stolichnaia to name a few. They were sold in bottles of various sizes.[265] In the films where the narrative takes place in the countryside characters drink almost exclusively vodka (*The Red Snowball Tree* [1973], *Asya's Happiness* [1967]) both at home and in a bar. It is the alcoholic beverage drunk by all classes, in all possible occasions and in the biggest quantities. It helps the drinking facilities and the shops to fulfill their (economic) plan. In a comedy *Give Me the Complaint Book* (1964), we learn how the restaurant has overfulfilled the plan with the help of alcohol residuals collected from customers' glasses. One of the waitresses explains that with "light wine they could never fulfill the plan," which explains why the "overfulfilled plan

[265] Vodka bottles were called *merzavchik* (devil) and *chekushka* (folk song).

is not often expressed in percentages but in volumes." The Governmental propaganda which urged overproduction and was backed up with the communist slogan "To each according to his needs," is ironically emphasized in the movie, and justifies the large amounts of firewater served in the restaurant. One can wonder how such society-critical scenes and texts managed to escape the censorship. The reason is probably that in spite of "speaking Bolshevik," they did it in a very ironical way. However, selling drinks served not only the state economy but also private interests. In the banned movie *Brief Encounters* (1967) one bar worker explains to another how it is possible to work *na levo* (on the left or making personal profit) by selling 140 grams of vodka instead of 150 grams. In fact, making a little of the side (*podrabatyvat'*) was nothing unusual in Soviet society, but showing or talking about it on the screen, especially in the 1950s and 1960s, was definitely a risky undertaking.

Moonshining and selling bootleg alcohol was also covered cinematically, although between the 1950s and 1970s these themes belonged exclusively to satire since it was the only genre which with the help of slapstick, "white dogs" and happy endings managed to a certain extent to avoid censorship and at the same time mock the existing order and values. The best example here is Leonid Gaidai's *Bootleggers* (1961) where the naive villains ended up behind the bars. However, the "feel-good-factor" of the film, consisting of the set of funny scenes where the villains were drinking, selling or making bootleg alcohol made the criminal characters widely popular and loved among the audiences.

In the 1980s, when the winds of relaxation began to blow, the movies were allowed to be more critical. There appeared some films where alcohol consumption was directly related to criminality, prostitution and hooliganism, in short to the overall deterioration of the social fabric. At that time, restaurants were portrayed as being full of swindlers, pimps and prostitutes who during the time of the anti-alcohol campaign drank foreign brands (*Criminal Talent* [1988], *Intergirl* [1989]). The masses, after a long day of queuing up, were left to drink vodka bought in exchange for a handful of coupons or to turn to a neighbour who, in spite of the official prohibition, was producing moonshine of questionable quality. Drinking *samogon* in a narrow, worn kitchen in a gloomy apartment became the sign of poverty, alcoholism and despair that protagonists Vera and Tatiana from *Little Vera* (1989) and *Intergirl* (1989) were trying to escape. However, the prospects of a possible "other" life proved to be as gloomy as the existing reality.

4.3 The Art of Drinking

Based on the discussion in Chapter 3, I argue that the drinking patterns of Soviet everyday or *byt* were dominated by the elements of both the traditional and modern drinking culture. In fact, after seeing many films of various genres I can conclude that similar tendencies were also reflected in the movies. Soviet people maintain their folksy traditions and return back to their roots when they became tipsy. They perform folk dances and melancholic folk songs among relatives and strangers, on the train, in the street and at home. Such examples can be found in many films, including *Love and Doves* (1984), *Kinfolk* (1981), and *Asya's Happiness* (1967). Furthermore, I argue that films of the postwar era manage to show how these two cultures melt together and intertwine, especially with the help of the unwritten Soviet etiquette of *kul'turnost'* and one of the fundamentals of Soviet morality-- collectivism. According to Vera Dunham, the notion of *kul'turnost'* (cultured-ness) derives from the concept of "cultural revolution" that originated in the 1920s when *kul'tura* (culture) as a "higher culture, a synthesis of ideas, knowledge, and memories" was put to the service of the new ideology for translating it into the everyday.[266] This new concept not only mixed pre-revolutionary and proletarian culture, but also created new "manners, ways of behavior, and discerning taste in food and consumer goods."[267] *Kul'turnyi* (cultured) drinking, for example, included everything from white table-cloths and a wide choice of *zakuski* (appetizers) to the way alcohol was consumed. Vodka could still be drunk by the glassful, in a single draught, but the availability of *zakuski* depended on social class; everything from pickled cucumbers and bread to red and black caviar gave the impression of a consumer's independence from alcohol. Drinking without tidbits, a tablecloth or directly from the bottle were direct references to uncultured-ness and alcoholism. In *Elder Son* (1975), one young character refuses to drink without appetizers referring to it as "uncultured drinking." For those who are eager to keep up appearances and gloss over their evident alcohol-dependence, like Igor and Kolia in *Love by Request* (1983), newspaper functions as a replacement for a clean tablecloth and as a disguise for the drinkers' bad habit.

[266] Vera Dunham, *In Stalin's Time: Middleclass Values and Soviet Fiction*, 2nd ed. (Dunham: Duke University Press, 1990), 22.
[267] Svetlana Boym, *Common Places: Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 105.

Figure 6. Moments of cultured drinking. Wedding scene from *Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears* (1979).

In fact, *kul'turnost'* does not proscribe drinking but getting drunk is a vice, although teetotalers are considered weird or even outsiders. On New Year's Eve in *The Carnival Night* (1956), we see people drinking but nobody is intoxicated or even tipsy. Those who refuse a shot, like academic Nekadilov and bureaucrat Ogurtsov, are either talked into rising a glass or labelled "incurable." However, as the line between alcohol use and abuse was thin, such unexpected "cross-overs" proved to be cinematically very popular. Nekadilov, after being intoxicated from the cognac, forgets his initial plan that included a formal astronomy lecture and becomes "one of us," a stand-up comedian, and instead of telling about the possible existence of life on Mars he tells how he hopes to see five stars instead of one.[268] The initially positive working class character Goga in *Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears* (1979) commits an offence against the rules of *kul'turnost'* and falls into a binge when rebelling against Katia's higher occupational status. But the salt-dried vobla-banging and half-naked *kommunalka* resident without any fancy must-have furniture is forgiven by the viewers due to his overall cultured and altruistic nature. After all, alcohol abuse is justified on gloomy occasions which automatically entail consumption of strong alcohol in larger quantities such as in *The Cranes Are Flying* (1957). It is essential to give an impression that one is not an

[268] Nekadilov refers here to the stars on the label of the cognac bottle indicating its quality.

addict, but does this seldom. In *Intergirl* (1989), a short dialogue serves as an illumination of the cover-up attitude:

> Edvard: We [in Sweden] pretend that we drink.
> Tania: But we [in the Soviet Union] pretend that we do not drink.

One the other hand, collectivism, which is believed to have its roots in the peasant *mir*, sustained the concept of *kul'turnost'*. The collective, as the main unit of Soviet society, was expected to indoctrinate Soviet individuals. People were expected to live for and with the collective.[269] Such attitudes were always present in the movies of the pre-Khrushchev era where collective heroes neglected their personal lives for the sake of the success of the collective farm or the plant. Later, however, in terms of alcohol consumption, the collective was often portrayed as the main culprit, since "in any conflict between the collective--representing the majority--and the individual, the collective is always right."[270] Despite the fact that the collective strengthened social relations, it also enforced certain behavioral patterns; however, refusing alcohol in festive occasions was interpreted as an offence already in Old Rus'.

One way to get abstainers to drink is to toast for something the other finds embarrassing to refuse. In *100 Grams for Courage* (1976) they toast to the guest's motherland and to "all women"; refusal would mean disrespect towards the guest's motherland and the house mistress. In the Caucasian custom, for example, toasting is an important part of the oral culture and is something which is humorously depicted in the Soviet blockbuster *Kidnapping, Caucasian Style* (1967). Here the parable-like toasts indicate the ideology and material ambition of the era. Examples from the movie:

> *I have a wish to buy a house, but I have no means. I have means to buy a goat, but I have no wish. May our wishes always match our means![271]*

[269] More about importance of collective in Soviet society, see Vladimir Shlapentokh, *Public and Private Life of the Soviet People: Changing Values in Post- Stalin Russia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).
[270] Ibid., 131.
[271] Имею желание купить дом, но не имею возможности. Имею возможность купить козу, но не имею желания. Так выпьем за то, чтобы наши желания совпадали с нашими возможностями.

When the flock of birds flew southward for the winter, one small but proud bird said, "I am flying to the sun!" The bird soared upwards, but soon singed its wings and fell into a very deep canyon. May none of us, no matter how high we fly, break ties with the collective![272]

These were usually law-abiding, honest and humble protagonists whom the directors depicted as victims of obtruding modern habits and folksy traditions. Semen in Diamond Arm, Shurik from *Kidnapping, Caucasian Style* (1967), the Georgian guest in *100 Grams for Courage* (1976), and Buzykin and Danish scholar Hansen in *Autumn Marathon* (1979) belong to this company. The sentence "I do not drink" is not taken seriously and interpreted as a polite modesty, or, rather as an inside jargon among alcohol abusers who deny their addiction both in *100 Grams for Courage* (1976) and *Kidnapping, Caucasian Style* (1966).

Figure 7. Scene from *Kidnapping, Caucasian Style* (1966).
Administrator: A toast without wine is like a wedding night without the bride.
Shurik: Thank you, but I do not drink.
Administrator: Do I? What's here to drink?

[272] И вот когда вся стая полетела зимовать на юг, одна маленькая, но гордая птичка сказала: "Лично я полечу прямо на солнце". Она стала подниматься все выше и выше, но очень скоро обожгла себе крылья и упала на самое дно самого глубокого ущелья. Так выпьем же за то, чтобы никто из нас, как бы высоко он не летал, никогда не отрывался бы от коллектива.

Moreover, toasts are often shown as a means for keeping the drinking "going" for all participants who are expected to drink *do dna* (bottoms up). The well-known line "The one, who is toasted to, drinks bottoms up!"[273] from *Autumn Marathon* (1979) becomes a cliché also outside the screen. A feeling of guilt is often implanted into those who initially refuse to drink. "What would he think of us like this," asks Haritonov from Buzykin in *Autumn Marathon* (1979), referring to the possible negative impression of the Danish researcher. In *100 Grams for Courage* (1976), when a working collective is celebrating the overfulfillment of the annual plan, a toastmaster proposes to drink for every percent individually. The woman who rises a glass filled with mineral water instead of something stronger is mocked publicly by the toastmaster for showing her respect for collective's labour input in "bubbles." Furthermore, abstainers are reproached for their lack of respect for those who drink. Despite initial rejection, such persuasion tactics usually work (*Ivan Vasil'evich Changes Profession* [1973], *The Diamond Arm* [1968], *Autumn Marathon* [1979]).

Figure 8. Scene from *Autumn Marathon* (1979). Celebrating the meeting. Haritonov: I drank to you. It means that you're the toasted one [tostumeyi]! I drank all, now you must also drink bottoms up! That's how we do it here in Russia.

[273] Тостуемый пьет до дна.

4.4 Cinematic Portrayal of a Drinker: From Working Class Parasite to Middle Class Dandy

Over the course of years, the image of the alcohol consumer changed as did the overall political and socioeconomic view on alcohol consumption and alcoholism, and the fetters of film censorship were loosened. Thus, on the basis of the films I have seen, it is difficult to put together a picture of the average Soviet alcohol consumer. One way to do a certain cinematic "mapping" of the alcohol consumer is to view their consumption patterns according to the class structure that existed in the Soviet Union. In fact, if we follow Boris Segal's division of Soviet drinkers according to their social belonging (introduced in Chapter 2), we find a more structured framework for such an analysis.[274]

The drinking characters, who belonged to the *nomenklatura* and the Soviet elite, were almost non-existent in the movies. Any disputable depiction of higher rank not coinciding with the Marxist-Leninist logic would have been censored already during the development of the film screenplay. Almost similar attitudes can be found with regard to the Soviet police. During the 1950s and 1960s, direct portrayals of alcohol consumption or a drunken condition among *militsiia* were unacceptable, although in comedies, like in *Beware of the Car* (1966) and in *Kidnapping, Caucasian Style* (1966), one could find some witty scenes. In *Kidnapping, Caucasian Style*, the policeman offers a drink to the university student Shurik in order to contribute to the student's ethnographical research on toasts. The wine decanter in the inspector's office and drinking in the daytime were definitely out of step with the socialist normative, but in this case the smoothing element was the officer's belonging to another culture and nationality as well as his noble cause. During the 1980s, it became easier to add elements of Soviet *byt* to films, resulting in situations where police were allowed to drink a glass or more. (*Petrovka*, 38 [1980], *Criminal Talent* [1988], *According to the Criminal Investigation* [1979]). However, these occasions, although they added some more human layers to the *militsiia* stereotype, never ended with alcohol abuse.

So, basically, we are left with two major classes, which are the middle class and the working class. Under the middle class I subsume white-collar workers, teachers, doctors, hard-working black marketeers, and so forth, while by working class I am referencing factory workers and agricultural workers, as well as criminals. But before we move to these two

[274] More about class structure in the Soviet Union, see Katherine B Eaton, *Daily Life in the Soviet Union* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004), 112-15.

categories I should mention that alcohol consumption and binge drinking in Soviet films is very male-centered which did not mean that all women were abstainers. Despite the fact that official ideology advocated equal rights between men and women, the films reinforced traditional sex-role expectations. It meant that on the screen women would drink on festive occasions, and moderately, as drunkenness would mean interference with their responsibilities as mothers and with their careers. More common are situations when an abstaining and loving female character has a tempering effect on the alcohol abusing male (*Destiny of a Man* [1959], *For Family Reasons* [1977], *Love by Request* [1983]). Furthermore, it is not rare to see scenes in which a woman, in fear of losing control over the man's drinking binge is portrayed as nosing around to prevent one (*Love and Doves* [1984], *Diamond Arm* [1968]).

In the 1980s, changing ideological conventions with regard to freedom and westernization resulted in images of women who openly consumed alcohol and were even drunk, possibly because it symbolized a break from the traditional dominant power structure. Alcohol consumption, however, makes them vulnerable and inclined towards sexual exploitation. Despite the notorious exclamation "There is no sex in the USSR!," images of drunken women embodied promiscuity and sexual looseness like in *Little Vera* and *Intergirl*.[275]

[275] The words were pronounced in 1986 during the Leningrad-Boston "television-bridge" devoted to women's questions. One Soviet participant explained that in their country [the USSR], there was no sex on TV. Unfortunately, the second half of her sentence disappeared into the laughter of the other participants causing a canonization of the first half of the declaration. Vladimir Pozner, "Moe vremia stoit dorogo," *Kurier kul'tury*, July 23, 2007. http://www.mkset.ru/news/culture/7431/, last accessed April 5, 2012.

Figure 9. Drinking Tatiana. Scene from *Intergirl* (1989).

4.4.1 Working Class

As discussed in Chapter 3, movies with working class protagonists outnumbered other films made in the Soviet Union which, in accordance with the official ideology was, after all, a workers' state. Similarly, working class characters were also shown as more likely to indulge in heavy drinking. Therefore, the working class needed *vospitanie* (education) in order to cut the cords to the Russian peasant *mentalité* which stereotyped the peasants as illiterate and lawbreakers.[276]

The image of the alcohol abuser as a parasite is most common in the slapstick comedies of the 1960s. In *Operation Y* and *Other Shurik's Adventures* (1965), the lazy and ill-bred Fedia Verzila is sentenced to 15 days of community service for getting into a fight with the helpful and hard-working Shurik, but Fedia manages to exploit the goods of socialist society even on the construction site where he is set to work. He arrives in a *militsiia*-car eating ice-cream and is treated with a guided tour and a three-course meal while Shurik's lunch consists of a loaf of bread and a bottle of milk. Fedia explains his attitude with a reversed proverb: "The one who does not work- eats!" Mocking scenes showing the gullible attitude of the government towards reeducation of "alcoholics, parasites, hooligans" culminate with skinny Shurik literally whipping Fedia's ass. This symbolizes the

[276] See Maureen Perrie, "Folklore as Evidence of Peasant Mentalite: Social Attitudes and Values in Russian Popular Culture," *The Russian Review* 48, no. 2 (1989).

"explanatory work" with the help of corporal punishment, despite Fedya's pleads for "humanity."

Charismatic drunkards, even when they are parasites and hooked on crime, were loved by the Soviet viewer. It was probably their clownery, simple-mindedness and eagerness to outsmart the state that made them so popular. The trio, Georgii Vitsyn, Iurii Nikulin, and Evgenii Morgunov, known as ViNiMor, wrote themselves into the history of Russian cinema by playing the three drink-prone stooges Byvalyi (the Experienced), Balbes (Dumb Ass) and Trus (Coward). They were repeatedly cinematically utilized as they were an excellent audience magnet.[277] In fact, they were definitely *not* worthy role models for Soviet youth and neither were they advocates for an abstinent lifestyle, but the hilarious acting style of ViNiMor and their typical gags are remembered and cited even in today's Russia.

Figure 10. Dialogue between ViNiMor from *Give Me the Complaint Book* (1964).
Byvalyi: He asks me, "Why do you drink?"
Balbes: Only camel, desert animal, does not drink.
Trus: And smoked fish does not drink. Why should it--it's an appetizer.

Indeed, movies also attach drinking mores to working class hooliganism and "criminal element" (*kriminal'nyi element*). The association between drinking and criminality

[277] The trio has appeared together in five movies: *Dog Barbos and Unusual Cross* (1960), *Bootleggers* (1961), *Give Me the Complaint Book* (1964), *Operation Y and Other Shurik's Adventures* (1965), and *Kidnapping, Caucasian Style* (1967).

grows stronger in the 1970s when films depict former convicts fighting against the stereotype "Once a thief, always a thief." Escaping convicts are expected to be tempered in *Gentlemen of Fortune* (1972) with the help of the anti-alcohol leaflet "Man and Wine." Additionally, the village prose, which receives extensive attention during the Brezhnev era when speedy urbanization creates "back to the roots" nostalgia, gave these stigmatized characters more depth, although maintained their rustic speech pattern and peasant mentality (*The Red Snowball Tree* [1973]). However, in the 1980s, one can find examples of stereotyped characters like the balalaika-playing and boozing dog-turned-proletarian Sharikov in *Heart of the Dog* (1988), based on the novel by Mikhail Bulgakov. The image of Sharikov stands in stark contrast to Zakalov from *Destiny of a Man* (1959), also an adaption, where his courage to empty three glasses of vodka in front of Nazi officers earns him the respect of his enemy. Sharikov's drinking binge and aggressive behavior, on the contrary, is related to his brutal urges that give face to the proletarian class *per se*.

Figure 11. From *Heart of the Dog* (1988). Sharikov with friends emptying glass jars of fluid for preserved specimens.

Descending into alcohol abuse becomes characteristic to protagonists who have lost their fame. Both Oleg (*Love by Request* [1983]) and Sergei (*Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears* [1979]) were promising sportsmen and abstainers, but have become money-borrowing

drunkards.[278] An underdog image is also attached to the protagonists' loss of material things and the disappearance of *kul'turnost'*. Oleg explains that he has lost everything, "a wife, an apartment, and Japanese audio-video system," placing material values on a par with lost human relations and values, emphasizing the "cult of things" nature of the era. Indeed, the separate apartment, so valued among urban Soviets, of those who appreciate drinking more than other habits of life, becomes an empty cage with worn-out wallpaper and no furniture, only a bed and empty bottles functioning as a visual metaphor for their empty lives (*For Family Reasons* [1977]). Although they have a job and apartment, these characters drink in order to build up their masculinity. To give an impression that they are somebody, even if only for a night. The father character in *Little Vera* (1989) questions his son-in-law's manhood by explaining that one "even cannot drink vodka with him."

As drink injects courage and to a certain extent helps to rebuild lost dignity. With the help of a drink, weak men become mighty, and vice versa. They can become overly passionate like Uncle Mitia in *Love and Doves* (1984), or give shy and coward Semen the courage to perform a song in front of all restaurant customers. "The Song About Hares" with a refrain "We could not care less/ We could not care less/ Bolder we will be/Than wolf and owl" was considered anti-Soviet by the censors, but since it was performed by Iurii Nikulin, a well-known clown, playing a character in a drunken state, it passed the trial. The protagonist's drunkenness functioned as an armor against censors who interpreted ironical or ambiguous statements flown from the lips of the drunk as politically and aesthetically less offensive.[279]

[278] In fact, it is known that part of the scenes with Sergei in intoxicated state in *Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears* became censored and cut out. See Fedor Razzakov, *Gibel sovetskogo kino*. *Kniga 2. Tainy zakulisnoi voiny*, *1973-1991* (Moscow: EKSMO- Press, 2008), 1991.

[279] More about The Diamond Arm, see Aleksandr Prokhorov, "The Diamond Arm," in *The Cinema of Russia and the Former Soviet Union,* ed. Birgit Beumers (London: Wallflower Press, 2007), 129-37.

Figure 12. Iurii Nikulin aka Semen performing "Song of Hares." From *The Diamond Arm* (1968).

4.4.2 Middle Class

If working class images were associated with peasant mentality and drinking took place "just for fun" or due to a developing alcohol addiction, then middle class images were generally more tempered and their drinking binges were associated either with forced occasions or with deep personal sadness. In all cases, middle class characters leave the impression that drinking is not a habitual element of their *byt*. However, we learn that even the seemingly correct citizen and scientist Shurik keeps a decanter filled with vodka in his fridge next to the bottle of milk (*Ivan Vasil'evich Changes Profession* [1973]). Shurik's image, played by Aleksandr Dem'ianenko, is a modern version of Ivan-the-Fool who is attracted to books and self-education instead of enjoying the conveniences of the socialist regime. His sincerity is mocked and in a way his understanding of reality is based on the illusions stated in the official ideology, making him a flawless middle class hero. He is also overly temperate, a cinematic attribute which makes him a challenge for the surrounding working-class. Characters such as Shurik can be found in very many movies and they all end up drunk or tipsy due to the collective press in order to "fit them in" or make them more like the "rest of us." In *The Carnival Night* (1956), academic Nekadilov is made "one of us" by filling him up with cognac, and, in that way, save the joyous celebration from a formal lecture. Or, in *100 Grams for Courage* (1976) where the Georgian guest is expected to defend his dissertation but fails since he is reluctantly following the unwritten rules of hospitality.

The art of saying "no" is not an issue for the next type of middle class image of alcohol consumer, who is a dandy-rouge in search of higher social status and better income.

The number one Soviet cinematic dandy was unquestionably played by actor Andrei Mironov. His flamboyant characters Dima Semitsvetov in *Beware of the Car* (1966), Gennadii Kozodoiev in *The Diamond Arm* (1968), Ostap Bender in *The Twelve Chairs* (1976), Andreii Vasil'iev in *Unbelievable Adventures of Italians in Russia* (1974) and many more gave a face to the petty bourgeoisie individual whose constant craving for western lifestyle and way of being stood in stark contrast with the socialist ideal. Personages impersonated by Mironov embody the elements of "la dolce vita"; they drink the best brands in the best restaurants, drive in a Volga, dance twist, use foreign expressions and their well-cut suits reflect an image of a self-confident individual whose biggest fear is to live on one salary. Although on the façade of *kul'turnyi chelovek* (cultured man) they live mainly of roguery, they manage to keep up appearances even when they are drunk and rarely lose their dignity, like when treating a hangover with a mouthful of champagne right from the bottle as Kozodoiev does in *The Diamond Arm* (1968). As such a lifestyle was unobtainable for common people, these images served the audiences with a breeze of "fresh air," but they also connoted to the western stains that the Soviet system itself had created. Compared to protagonists who drink because of world-weariness or personal loss, like doctor Fiodor Ivanovich in *The Cranes Are Flying* (1957) when sending his son to the war, or Vereschagin in *The White Sun of the Desert* (1970) grieving over his uselessness, Mironov embodies totally different values.

Figure 13. Sending his son off to war, Fiodor Ivanovich denies Mark's wine saying, "Drink it yourself. We will have a more robust drink." In *The Cranes are Flying* (1957).

Consequently, we can question why middle class drinking images were displayed in more modest ways compared to those of the working class. Louis Menashe argues that as filmmakers themselves belonged to the middle class, working-class people were often shown as "dark people" of a modernized Russia that replaced the peasantry of the old society.[280] However, the cinematic value of working class drunken images in terms of movies as cultural texts, in my opinion, is much higher than of middle class images, as they became means for social criticism.

Working class drinking images were used more often to mediate changes in society and through them emerged the vices carefully hushed up by the state. A forgotten war veteran in *Kinfolk* (1981), whose drunken and lonely life are brightening the few occasions when he can wear a coat coved with medals, or vodka-lover neighbour in *Autumn Marathon* (1979), whose main concern is to find a *sobutyl'nik* (booze partner) in order to prevent the stigmatization of being the only drunk in the *khruschevka*, are some examples. The socialist façade, however, is being finally demolished in *Little Vera* (1989) where the features of a destructive society, in which illicit trade, alcohol and violence lead to fatal consequences, are comprised in a working class father figure. Illegal alcohol is kept here in gallon jars and consumed daily while only occasional aggression scenes manage to shake the torpid reality. Thus, in the 1980s, both working and middle class drinking images have become so habitual and everyday that they are no longer associated with comical characters, like in the 1960s. Neither do they seem to bother the audiences or the censors. General tiredness and apathy towards life paved the way for "developed alcoholism" also in the movies.

[280] Menashe, *Moscow Believes in Tears*, 257.

Chapter 5 "Alcoholism Films" in Soviet Cinematography

The first time alcoholism was portrayed in the movies was during the NEP period, when cineastes were freer to experiment and when the idea of a sober socialist Russia was propagated. These courtroom temperance melodramas of the 1920s (*The Trial of Stepan Korolev* [1924] and *Saba* [1929]), also known as *agitsudy* (agitation mock trials), illustrate the uses of movies in the service of early Soviet temperance propaganda. Here, the "drunkard combined innocence and villainy in a single person, conflating moral positions that were usually polarized in separate good and evil character" and "ended his despicable career only with a violent conversion from dissipation to abstinence that provided the perfect model for conversion to bolshevism."[281] In the 1930s, the awareness of excessive alcohol consumption was expected to be raised with the help of good old film trains (known as *kino-poezd*) which showed short, satirical films about social vices.[282] However, the development of Soviet Realism swept critical tempering experimentations away from the screen and made the problem of alcoholism cinematically nonexistent. Cinematic realism in the Soviet context did not focus on problems. Quite the opposite, it concentrated on an ideologically correct presentation of reality.[283]

On the screen, alcoholism and socialism remained incompatible until the mid-1970s, when the first temperance melodramas concentrating on alcohol problems were released. Many of the conventions of alcoholism--for instance, the stock scenes of delirium tremens--were never cinematically shown before the Brezhnev era. However, some of them, although meant as propaganda against excessive consumption, turned out to be rather comical and entertaining. Others stood out not only for their moralizing character, but also for the filmmakers' skillful utilization of documentary scenes from police stations, sobering-up stations and hospitals that gave the movies serious credibility. But theme films about alcoholism were never particularly popular among audiences or *kassovye* as they did not offer enough entertainment. Such films could be also granted fewer distributional copies, since they portrayed Developed Communism in a bad light. Even if the last sentence is merely an assumption--taking into consideration the importance of thematic planning, official film

[281] Julie A. Cassiday, "Alcohol is Our Enemy!" in *Imitations of Life: Two Centuries of Melodrama in Russia*, edited by Louise McReynolds and Joan Neuberger (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 154.
[282] Beumers, *History of Russian Cinema*, 78.
[283] See also subsection of Chapter 3 "Ideology of Socialist Realism."

rating and censorship--the idea of a possible damaging effect of such films might have influenced their poor screening.

In this chapter, I concentrate on a close textual reading of alcoholism films, all of which center around the same main theme--becoming and living as an alcohol addict and combating alcoholism. We observe the aesthetics of the films and how they portray alcoholic protagonists and their psychological motives for drinking. Additionally, I try to capture and mediate the overall atmosphere of alcoholism movies. In order to make the movie analyzes more understandable, I have also prefaced each film analysis with a synopsis. As mentioned above, the Soviet film industry was not keen on alcoholism film, and after a long search I have managed to find only seven films that could be placed under this category. Moreover, two of them, *Ulan* (1977) and *Sunday Night* (1979), are not produced by the Soviet Russian film industry, but originate from two other brother-republics.[284]

5.1 Afonia (1975)

In Afonia (1975), director Georgii Daneliia concentrates on the life of a "little person" (*melkii chelovek*)--in case of the Soviet this is a story of a working man. It is a significant film in several respects. First, the movie became a box office leader in 1975, which is a direct result of its light genre which blended satire and drama. Second, it was a first Soviet motion picture, a *pervaia lastochka* (first swallow) among the films where the main theme was built up around alcoholism. Exploiting the serious theme, comedic language and characters, Daneliia managed to create an authentic compote of officially prevailing, polished images of the alcoholic character that state and collective lack means to cultivate. At first sight, the main protagonist Afonia may cinematically stand out more like an anti-hero than a disgrace of Soviet society. First, we see alcohol consumption only twice and in small amounts--a bit of beer mixed with vodka at the beginning of the film, and a glass of wine in the middle of the movie. The only inklings of Afonia's turbulent binges are the scenes which show his picture on bulletin board and his name spoken in public reprimands from the workers' committee regarding his behavior in a drunken state. Second, in *Afonia*, the condition of alcoholism has not resulted in job loss, neither it is synonymous with ill health and despondency. Quite the opposite: the protagonist is a healthy-looking, chatty character with high self-esteem who stops the taxi in order to ask the driver to light his cigarette and does not say "no" to one

[284] *Ulan* (1977) was produced by Kirgizfil'm and *Sunday Night* (1979) by Belarus'fil'm.

night stands. Hence drinking, in Afonia's case, is associated with masculine qualities such as impulsiveness and daring.

Synopsis: Set in a city, *Afonia* tells a story of the dissolute plumber Afanasii Borshchov (Leonid Kuravlev), who goes by the nickname Afonia. Afonia is more concerned with the lack of opportunities for alcohol consumption than with doing his work, and is eagerly encouraged in this by his drinking buddy Fedul (Borislav Brondukov). Due to Afonia's low working morale, the interns placed under his supervision ask for another tutor. Finally, his long-time girlfriend leaves him because of his alcohol dependence and Afonia decides to find a new romance in a dance night. There he gets acquainted with a young and sincere nurse, Katia (Evgeniia Simonova), who falls for him although Afonia does not pay attention to her. The night ends with a fight and Afonia's black eye. Afonia's uncultured behavior and over the top drinking binges are discussed at staff meetings, but he does not care about public condemnation. Instead, Afonia is eagerly exploiting the awkward situation of his clients for earning extra rubles. During one of his working calls, Afonia falls in love with his client Elena (Nina Maslova) whom he is eager to please by replacing her old Soviet sink with a Finnish steel sink. But he soon learns that he is too rustic for Elena, and in order to mend his broken heart Afonia turns to Katia. After a promising night, Afonia is uncertain about his intentions and decides to move to the country-side to be with his aunt who has raised him since his parents' death but whom he has not seen for years. There he learns that she has passed away leaving her house and a few possessions to him, including letters that the aunt herself has written under Afonia's name. Mournful and broken, Afonia tries unsuccessfully to reach Katia by phone; on the way to the plane he is stopped by Katia who has decided to follow him to the countryside, believing that Afonia can be changed.

The opening scene of the film strikes the viewer with the contrast between ballerinas and the sockless and smock-wearing arrogant alcoholic Fedul searching for his drinking buddy Afonia in a ballet theater. Fragile ballerinas wearing white tutus are confusedly stopped after the appearance of this strange character among them. One can sense a clash between two worlds--one cultured in white pointe shoes, the other ignorant and rough controlled by addiction. However, for our protagonist Afonia, drinking is not an issue. He represents the image of a modern proletarian, who despite being on probation caused by alcohol abuse, is still looked and sought after. He feels irreplaceable in a land of leaking

pipes, sinks and toilets. Afonia is clearly taking advantage of his position and extorts extra money from his customers even for even the most routine repairs, although his deficient work ethic does not coincide with official Soviet morale. Moreover, he seems to live according to the principle "the end justifies the means," pretending to be handicapped and lying about his non-existent sick relative in order to use his salary for visiting the local *pivnushka* as quickly as possible.

The question arises as to whether it is Afonia's alcohol abuse that influences his low working morale or vice versa. The more we get into the storyline, the more we are given impression that alcoholism in the Soviet Union is an everyday phenomenon which is overlooked if the person manages to keep up appearances and hold on to a job. Indeed, even the light mood and leitmotif of the film contributes to the impression that drinking in the Soviet Union is something acceptable. Additionally, the director shows how Afonia-like "parasites" were not paid attention to and how the system let them happily vegetate in their own bubble. Occasionally, they were scolded by the collective, but they did not care.

Figure 14. Fedul among ballerinas.

We are not told much about the reasons behind Afonia's alcohol addiction. Although one can find several references to his peasant mentality--his habit of humming folk songs and his fairy-tale dreams of a peasant hut filled with children and a long-braided wife, as well as his folksy dancing style--in the movie this is not related to his alcoholism. Quite the opposite,

his escape from the city and his village dreams about a promising future reveal his softer side and sober his attitude towards life. Neither can Afonia's friends and work collective be seen as the biggest culprits in the propagation of alcohol consumption. True, Afonia's drinking buddy Fedul is persistently hanging around in the hope of sharing a bottle, but this does not soften the image of Afonia, who forces a stranger to drink with him in order to not feel guilty for being the only one drinking a mixture of beer and vodka in a *pivnushka*.

Despite the bright Soviet façade that the film's mood and the majority of the characters epitomize, Afonia's passivity towards himself, others and the collective does not reflect the official view and expectations. Afonia's indifferent attitude contrasts the character of righteous, sincere and philosophically inclined Kolia, whom he meets in the bar and who searches for a meaning in life. Afonia does not care how others live, and neglects the communal tradition of "being like everyone else." Neither does he care whether his picture, complete with a critical commentary about his uncultured behavior, is displayed on a public bulletin board or not. Afonia wants to be a master of his own proletarian country. His apartment is empty and filthy and the wallpaper ripped. However, Afonia's nonconformity is not presented as a rebellion, but as a disease. For him, alcohol dispels the tediousness of everyday life.

Figure 15. Afonia performing a folk dance in a restaurant.

The only thing that moves Afonia, both emotionally and physically, is a lack of love. Even if getting rejected results in a binge, it is the protagonist's romantic involvement, as a common device in films in general, that leads to celebrating change and sobering up. It is no wonder then that it is the presence of a good-hearted woman whose unconditional and consistent love is expected to save Afonia, aka hopeless Ivanushka, from the grip of Koschei Immortal, aka alcoholism. Hence, typical of satire, *Afonia* has a happy ending. The nurse Katia decides to nurse Afonia "back to life" and help him to become a respectable member of society. It is an act of heroism and sacrifice that can redeem the alcoholic protagonist Afonia, leaving the audience with the impression of "happily ever after," making the movie with 62.2 million viewers the top blockbuster of the year 1975.[285]

5.2 Trouble (1977)

This painfully honest social drama by Dinara Asanova is probably the gloomiest Soviet "alcoholism movie" ever made. It was certainly produced as a temperance film, since it begins with a foreword, scrolling up the screen at the start of the film, which is actually an extract from the regulation "On Measures to Strengthen the Fight against Alcoholism and Inebriety" launched by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic. The foreword then proclaims:

> In the situation, when the Soviet people successfully implement the tasks of communist construction, drunkenness becomes more and more unbearable. Drunkenness is harmful to workers' health, often leads to the destruction of the family, and has a destructive effect on the upbringing of children. Under the influence of alcohol, people lose their sense of responsibility towards society and the state, and commit hooliganism and other crimes.

Additionally, in the prologue of the film, the audience is intentionally struck by several realistic shots from the everyday of a sobering-up station. We follow the arrival of the languid and unsteady bodies of different ages, their questioning and undressing process, and the loud protests of some clients which intertwine with the sharp sounds of a ticking clock as a reminder of time thrown away.

[285] Miroslava Segida and Sergei Zemlianukhin, *Domashniaia sinemateka: Otechestvennoe kino*, *1918-1996* (Moscow: "Dubl'-D", 1996).

Synopsis: In a small village lives a hardworking and kind man Slava Kupigin (Aleksei Petrenko) with his wife (Lidiia Fedoseeva-Shukshina), his newborn son and elderly mother (Elena Kuzmina). Their everyday idyll is shadowed by one serious problem--Slava is an alcohol addict. After the birth of their child, Slava promises his wife that he will put an end to his alcohol abuse but gradually he is drawn into drunkenness and cheap *pivnushka*. Beer is mixed with vodka in a stuffy room that has become his second home. After one drinking binge, Slava and his friend Maslakov (Georgii Burkov) are arrested and taken to a sobering-up station. Slava denies his addiction and changes from a calm worker and husband into a violent and shivering individual. In order to avoid trouble with *militsiia* and to justify his drinking, Maslakov suggests to Slava that he should obtain a medical certificate confirming his psychological instability. At his wife's request, Slava decides to visit a psychiatrist who tells him that if he does not admit his addiction problem, nobody can help him. Despite the pressure from authorities and family, Slava does not consider giving up drinking. In one of the nights when he lacks money for buying alcohol, Slava breaks into the village store and drinks stolen alcohol. As a result, he is sentenced to incarceration in a labour camp. His mother visits him during his second year of imprisonment. Then he decides to not return to the village after his release but instead start a new life somewhere else with his mother.

Figure 16. Slava in a sobering-up station.

Trouble is like a classic morality tale where the alcoholic protagonist's moral career is presented in three stages: seduction, fall from grace, and redemption.[286] Slava develops a dependency on alcohol, commits a crime and is forced to serve a sentence. However, after sobering up in the prison, he understands that he has not only lost his freedom, but also his family. Thus, alcoholism marks the character's romantic decline and defeat. In order to indicate the mood difference between Slava's sober prior life and his present alcoholism, the director plays with the light. Flashbacks of the past that portray Slava visiting his wife in the hospital and having a picnic, as well as scenes showing him sober are luminous and colourful while his drunken state and drinking binges are presented in darkness, at night or in dim light. Consequently, we may regard the changing light not only as a mediator of mood change, but also as one of the leading metaphors of the films, representing the battle between sobriety and inebriety. The alternation of seasons has a similar effect, since positive and worth-mentioning events in Slava's life take place in spring or summer while most of the movie is set in late autumn and a winter which--similarly to Slava's illness--does not seem to come to an end. Ultimately, Slava is swallowed by the darkness and ends up a trembling shadow of the New Soviet Man.

Similarly to Afonia, the causes of Slava's alcoholism are not revealed. We learn that he is weak and suggestible, and this makes him more vulnerable in the company of working buddies who like to lengthen their weekends with the help of drinking binges. Slava's bottle-buddy Maslakov considers himself a philosopher--not a drunkard--despite the fact that his philosophy solely consists of preaching about how, with the help of violence, one can seal the mouths of sobering wives and how one can "hear voices" in order to be labelled psychologically unstable and thus avoid criminal punishment.

Due to his addiction, Slava gets afflicted by delusional jealousy and memory loss. The close-up shots of him in a session with a psychiatrist, haunted by the sound of a ticking clock reflects the seriousness of his problem although he himself denies being an addict. His attitude is supported by the community's response to alcoholism as such. Shopkeepers and *pivnushka*-workers, all women, sell and serve alcohol in endless amounts to people who are drunk daily since this is a common habit among working men. Their frequent visits to sobering up stations, like in the scene with Slava and Maslakov, are officially condemned, yet authorities lack the means to influence the spreading epidemic, which is glossed over as a

[286] Denzin, *Hollywood Shot By Shot*, 42.

disruptive element in the fulfillment of the annual plan. Instead, the real responsibility and consequences of constant alcohol abuse are left to be carried by the addicts' families.

Figure 17. Mother visiting Slava in prison.

Not surprisingly, the movie includes the Russian stereotype of the all-forgiving and loving peasant mother. Her silent and submissive image stands in sharp contrast to the vociferous and alcoholic image of her son. In the movie, we see old mothers washing the windows of the *pivnushka* while their sons and spouses drink inside, almost as in the hopes of polishing and glossing the reality of their everyday. Later, in the darkness of the night, the same mothers and wives wander worriedly behind these windows hoping to take their sons and husbands home even if their concern may cost them a bruise or two. Slava's mother is one of these women. In tears, but tacitly, she puts up with Slavas's binges and remains by his side after his imprisonment. However, when visiting Slava in prison, she adheres to the Soviet unwritten bribing tradition when she hands the police-officer two bottles of vodka and, because of this, almost loses her chance of meeting Slava. This is confirmation of the saying that states "habit is stronger than reason" and the scene seems both unbelievable and heartbreaking--the mother of alcohol addict seeks clemency from the authorities with the help of alcohol, the main component responsible for Slava's deterioration. Frozen and shrunk apples hanging on snow-covered trees that Slava's mother is studying in the closing scene of the movie stand as metaphors for those thousands who have ruined and lost their lives because of alcoholism. However, every endless winter will eventually end, hence one cannot rule out the possibility of a new spring in Slava's life.

5.3 Friend (1987)

Friend, an outstanding portrayal of an alcoholic man, is a special film in three respects. First, this is not a typical attempt to temper the audiences or blame the state and society for their relaxed attitude towards alcohol abuse. Instead, the movie concentrates on showing the inner struggle of an individual whose identity and human face is swallowed up and transformed by a green serpent. Second, we are not presented with the traditional process of "falling," neither do we see the development from being an accepted member of society to becoming a parasite. Quite the opposite, the film takes under observation the process of recovery from alcoholic frenzy and explores struggles concerning such change in a man's life. Third, instead of the protagonist's romantic involvement which is a common device in films for celebrating change and sobering up, director Leonid Kvinihidze introduces a totally unconventional character – a dog with a human voice who comes to save a seemingly hollow underdog Koliun and helps him become a human again. Indeed, even a foreword of the movie that appears on the screen accompanied by the sound of echoing church bells accentuates the importance of every living individual. The foreword is taken from the short story *The Dreams of Chang* by famous Russian writer Ivan Bunin: "What does it matter of whom we speak? Any that have lived and that live upon this earth deserve to be the subject of our discourse."[287]

Synopsis: This one-man tragicomical drama about the former-musician-turned-boozer Koliun (Sergei Shakurov) is probably the most unconventional portrayal of alcoholic life in 1980s Moscow. In one of the hangover days, Koliun heads to the street market in order to swindle people out of their money for a new bottle with the help of his small-talk about his sickly children. He is stopped by a stranger who offers him a dog and even promises to pay Koliun forty rubles for it. Surprised by an unusual and lucrative offer Koliun agrees, thinking that he is going to sell the animal anyway. But the giant dog appears to be something more than an ordinary pet; it starts to speak in a human voice (voiceover by Vasilii Livanov) and its main goal is to help Koliun regain a normal life by keeping him away from a bottle. At first, Koliun is certain that he is going through a "shaking frenzy" or *delirium tremens*, but the intelligent and sarcastic dog who calls himself Drug (friend) is not an illusion. From day one, Drug does not let Koliun approach any alcoholic drink, demands from him absolute alcoholic abstinence, and makes him take up jogging as well as reading newspapers. Koliun

[287] Ivan Bunin, *The Dreams of Chang*, trans. Bernard Guilbert Guerney (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1923), 9.

is even expected to find a girlfriend, although the potential candidate takes him for skillful dog trainer. After having been a sober for a while, Koliun decides to look up his ex-wife and daughter, but the painful experiences of the past makes their meeting impossible. After this encounter, Koliun craves a drink more than ever before and gets help from a drinking buddy who arrives with dog-catchers. Drug is taken away and Koliun falls into a binge, ending up in a sobering up station. When Koliun comes home, he is met by Drug who, despite Koliun's betrayal, has returned.

Figure 18. Angry and bestial Koliun.

The image of a man in sweatpants with holes and bowtie begging extra rubles with the help of fabricated stories may initially seem like a clown-like loan taken from any of the immortal satirical comedies of Leonid Gaidai. In the 1980s, however, especially in the light of the notorious and comprehensive anti-alcohol campaign, the image reflects the failed attempt to sober up individuals who remain indifferent towards vigorous propaganda and restrictions while their addiction is kept alive by survival skills learnt by the society itself. Koliun's immunity towards tempering calls is not only a result of his constant intoxication but also his seclusion. The only occasions when he is open for human contact are when he looks for a bottle or for sharing one. His job in a dry cleaning service has not contributed to his development of communal interest and responsibility, but is more like a disturbing factor for his addiction. In fact, his angry nature and growling way of communicating reveals the image of a bitter loner who has forgotten about being domesticated. Therefore, it is a dog

who is supposed to sober up Koliun, not a man. Drug is a dog with an intelligent human-like face whose way of communication and attitude contrasts with Koliun's beastly behavior. The more Koliun sobers up, however, the more he becomes to resemble a man; he starts to speak calmly, takes up jogging, reads newspapers and even tries to clean his filthy apartment. Moreover, Koliun's recovery makes him seek out contact with other people and his family, although unsuccessfully.

In the movie, we find several examples of Christian symbolism and allegory. For example, the appearance of the talking dog in Koliun's life is no coincidence. Although it is given to Koliun by an unknown man, a former addict who humbly thanks the dog, Drug explains that he chose him out in order to save him and his purpose is to make Koliun happy. If Drug is a remarkably Christ-like figure, then Koliun resembles Judas. Despite their friendship, Koliun allows his dog to be taken away by the dog catchers since he cannot suppress his urge to drink. Hence, Koliun betrays Drug for alcohol. Even if Drug returns and forgives him, Koliun is forced to redeem himself by being locked into the sobering up station. Consequently, the sobering institution, an image of what constantly reappears in Koliun's dreams, white and in the snowfall, shows us that subconsciously he wishes to be enlightened and wake up from alcohol frenzy, but never does. At least not voluntarily. The leitmotif of the movie, *The Boston Waltz*, which tells us how good it is in a dream where the fall dances waltz, refers to the feeling of the state of intoxication Koliun is reluctant to depart from. Last but not least, the performer of *The Boston Waltz* and two other songs in the film, Aleksandr Rozenbaum, is best known as an interpreter of the *blatnaia pesnia* (criminal song) genre. His reputation accentuates Koliun's solitude as well as his revolt both for and against his addiction and rehabilitation.

Figure 19. Tamed Koliun walking home from the sobering up station.

Despite all its symbolism, however, the film manages to incorporate the prevailing realistic atmosphere of the Gorbachevian Russia regarding alcohol consumption. We see drinking at work, long and angrily buzzing mobs behind the drink shops molded into queues by the police, and a terrified family avoiding an encounter with a violent alcoholic father. The movie does not only advocate against drunkenness *per se*. It is a movie about the difficulty of losing and regaining human pride, dignity and self-esteem. Even if Koliun's triumph over his alcohol addiction may be temporary, it convinces the audience about the psychological complexity of rehabilitation and shows the hidden sides of an individual whose addiction has made him socially invisible and whose image can be initially related more to an animal than to a human being.

5.4 Grey Mouse (1988)

This social drama breaks the boundaries with the village prose which used to idealize the picture of traditional Russian village life. *Grey Mouse* does not hide the reality of the rural life. Neither does its location with its tranquility, wide landscapes, and green birch forests offer the protagonists the same moral asylum as it would in the 1960s. In the 1970s, due to alcohol abuse, a moral deterioration takes place within the village community similar to what goes on in the cities. Vladimir Shamshurin's film adaption of Vil' Lipatov's novel of the same name, published in 1970, is built up as a dramatic story of the moral decline of the

former director of the village factory who is addicted to the "green snake". The cinematic freedom of the era makes it possible to display over the top drinking scenes with trembling boozers gulping down vodka straight from the bottle. The movie does not ignore the medicinal effects of alcoholism or the complications of alcohol withdrawal. *Belaia goriachka* or delirium tremens, and alcohol related psychosis are directly related to the title of the movie, since the emergence of a gray mouse is nothing but Semen's visual hallucination.

Synopsis: In front of the audience unfolds a day in the life of four rural alcoholics and drinking buddies. On Sunday morning, all of them prepare for the coming drinking binge. The family man Vanechka ignores his children's pleas for not leaving for the regular binge and packs along some tidbits. Ustin tries desperately to escape from the weekend chores that his wife expects him to do, and Vit'ka, the youngest among the three, excuses himself in front of his girlfriend, explaining that he has to take care of Semen Vasil'evich, the former director of the village factory and the protagonist of the movie, who lives alone after his wife left him and is suffering from delirium tremens. All four wait for the opening of the village store and club together. Although they do not have enough money for a bottle of vodka, they manage to talk the shopkeeper into giving them one. After emptying the first bottle, they start wandering around the village in order to find someone who will offer them a drink or lend them some money. Semen's reflections on the past reveal that his drinking is a product of disillusionment with his job and clashing between him and authorities. As the director of the village factory, he criticized the Soviet style bureaucracy that forced him to cover up work deficiencies and lie about plan fulfillment and growth-rate. Standing now on the last step of the deterioration ladder, Semen avoids an encounter with a young man whom he once hired in spite of his criminal background and drinking and whom Semen helped to get back on his feet. After several bottles of vodka all four find themselves sleeping in a grove where they are woken by the wives of Vanechka and Ustin. Since Ustin's wife is able to tame him, then only three characters continue their staggering and agonizing bottle-search. Semen and Vit'ka turn to the chemist's where Semen buys two bottles of cologne that in turn lead him to panic attacks and hallucinations. Vanechka's behavior becomes more manic and paranoid and finally he ends up falling from a tower crane.

Figure 20. Semen is haunted by his memories and hallucinations.

Grey Mouse is a sort of "alcoholism road movie" where the final destination is "drunkenness." Here, the on-the-road plot is used to lead the wandering of four alcoholics from house to house in search of a bottle and then the constant next one. The obtaining of every next bottle is like a progress that needs to be celebrated. Out of these four boozers whose eyes become hazier and pace wobblier after every glass only one, Semen, can be described as problem drinker. His truth-seeking nature and honesty that made him outsider among local authorities, suggests an underlying psychological cause for his problematic drinking. Therefore, he uses alcohol as an anesthesiac, although his addiction has taken over his life and influences his health to a large degree.

The fall of Semen's fellows is largely a result of a lack of willpower. Their wild consumption pattern changes their nature completely. Vanechka turns into a violent and vociferous father and his ex-gunfighter past keeps his self-confidence high. Ustin changes from a whining husband into babbling and languid individual and Vit'ka into a loving boyfriend. Among the villagers, their weekly journey through and around the village gives rise to disdain and mockery that forces them to hide their drinking behind the sheds or in the grove. Neither public scolding nor the pleadings of their family members manage to make them give up their habit, which in turn shows the depths of their addiction.

This movie skillfully incorporates the images of the three cinematically prevailing types of Russian wives presented in the films where alcoholism or alcohol abuse is depicted. We have to remember that despite the official ideology that accentuated equality between women and men, women in Soviet Russia, in additional to holding full-time jobs, were

expected to conform to the traditional role expectations of being responsible for domestic chores and child rising. First, similar to the image of the all-forgiving mother, seen also in *Trouble* (1977), there is a character of a loving wife who never sees or admits her husband's addiction and believes his naked lies. Vit'ka's girlfriend fits this category. Second, one can find the image of a depressed wife who bears over with her husband's addiction in silence, rarely leaves him and is often the victim of domestic violence. Vanechka's spouse follows her husband's drinking trajectory in order to hand him clean and warm clothes, although she admits that in fear of violence she and children have to leave the house overnight every time Vanechka binges. Third, we are left with a strong and masculine woman who, in order to withstand her husband's addiction, was depicted as dominant and overbearing like Ustin's wife. But even these masculine women tolerate their husbands' drinking and childish behaviour. this could be the result of one of two factors--either an overall relaxed attitude towards male inebriety fixed by Russian drinking culture or negative attitudes in Russian society against runaway wives whose departure became cinematically responsible for the men's new binge or deepening addiction.

Figure 21. Ustin's wife punishing her drunken husband while humble Vanechka's spouse stands aside.

The end of the movie does not bring the longed-awaited abstinence. The passing river cruiser that all four sadly follow with their eyes stands as a metaphor for the beautiful life they themselves have chosen to drift away from. During a conversation between Ustin and

Vanechka the latter even hopes to sober up for good one day, but Ustin excludes the possibility by explaining that one cannot win over nature. While Semen is forced to face his demons brought alive by his hallucinations, Vanechka's binge becomes fatal. In the closing scene of the movie, we see and hear Vanechka's daughter reading an extract from Nikolai Gogol's *Dead Souls* (1842) where Russia is compared to a troika, galloping across the snowy steppes while other nations "gaze askance" and wonder where Rus' is speeding to? [288] In that way, the director of the movie artfully links the expanding alcohol addiction epidemic to the future of Rus', and makes the "green serpent" responsible for a possible troika-wreck.

[288] Nikolai Gogol, *Dead Souls*, trans. D. J. Hogarth (The Project Gutenberg EBook, 2008), pt. 1, chap. 11, http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1081/1081-h/1081-h.htm, last accessed September 10, 2012.

Conclusion

In this thesis I have tried to cover the evolution of alcohol consumption and alcoholism in Soviet movies, between 1953 and 1991, and used film as a "vehicle for reading transformations."[289] Also, I have attempted to read films as reflections of everyday life. Based on my observations, I can say that Lev Trotskii was partly right. During the years of Communism the movie theatres and *kolkhoz* club houses became flooded with films and people, replacing sermons and churches for the masses. However, to Trotskii's disappointment, the development of this highly important art did not manage to stem the rising levels of alcohol consumption. Soviet people loved to drink although the authorities were not so comfortable with the consequences--especially dealing with them. Nevertheless, we can definitely say that, in one way or the other, alcohol consumption habits and alcoholism offered colourful thematic material for filmmakers and cinema played a huge role in mediating the official views and public opinion on this vice.

On the screen festive occasions, arrival of the guest, and potentially stressful events seem to provide a legitimate excuse for a drink. Feelings of guilt are implanted into those who decide to refuse the shot. Semen from *The Diamond Arm*, Buzykin from *Autumn Marathon*, and the personage of Shurik from a series of movies are forced to put up with such scorn. Especially in certain locations, such as restaurants, avoiding alcoholic drink was interpreted as a sign of queerness and was mocked. In *Give Me a Complaint Book*, the waitress throws looks of surprise at a man who orders a cup of coffee when everybody around has a bottle or five on the table. Her mocking comment, "How decent man!", reflects the common attitude towards moderate drinkers. Similar attitudes can be found in *The Diamond Arm* where one of the villains utters scornfully, "Even teetotalers and those with stomach ulcer will have a drink on someone else's tab!"[290] Additionally, these were the modest drinkers who often became cinematic laughing stocks as, after overindulgence in alcohol, they usually did not manage to control the course of actions.

Excessive and frequent drinking occasions made it difficult to draw a line between alcohol use and abuse, neither were they linked to alcoholism. All celebration of paydays and New Year's Eve were turned into happy, carefree festivities which did not have any health related consequences. For cineastes, of course, this diffuse situation meant that they could

[289] Denzin, *Hollywood Shot by Shot*, 250.
[290] За чужой счет пьют даже трезвенники и язвенники!

exploit the societal "shortcomings" (*nedostatki*) in favor of the most important art. However, due to ideological constraints, the safest way to explore alcohol consumption and abuse was to make use of satire. Filmmakers were aware that movies were expected to be like "success indicators." In the end, all boozers were to become sober or get rightfully punished. *Bootleggers* were locked up in jail and boozers, like Fedia in *Operation Y*, were forced to change their attitude. One could see that the stigmatization of the alcohol abuser as a parasite and the instance of binge drinking became convenient cinematic signals which drew a line between a good and bad worker or cultured and uncultured individual--much like the distinction between Shurik and Fedia in *Operation Y*.

As movies were expected to educate their audience, alcohol abuse became associated with laziness, unproductiveness, even Westernization. All of these attitudes were first of all indicators of ideological indifference that hindered the collective from building the Communist state. Therefore, in order to sober up the parasite, *obshchestvennoe mnenie* (public opinion) which justified the growing party and collective intervention and *agitsudy* (public comrade trials) became most important devices both in real life and in cinema. In the movies *The Diamond Arm*, *100 Grams for Courage*, and *Afonia* we see bulletin boards with lecturing lines calling for sobriety and the pictures of alcoholics. These were expected to have a sobering effect on inebriates. Education, however, could be interpreted in many ways. Soviet Hollywood, regardless of the strict censorship system, did not become an immaculate "temperance project." For example, drinking occasions were very often intertwined with humorous situations and sketches that satisfied the audiences' yearning for entertainment. Even the seriousness of certain scenes was hidden or brightened up with the help of catchy phrases, or smoothed down with light musical compositions which gave the situation comical connotations.

Figure 22. The example of Soviet collective intervention made mockery of. The poster informs: "*Announcing comrade trial of the drunkard, debaucher and demolisher of morality comrade S.S. Gorbunkov. After trial- dances.*" From *The Diamond Arm* (1967).

Overindulgence in alcohol was most often depicted as a problem of male working class and peasant strata. Indeed, the Soviet cinematic image of a consumer and abuser excluded women and higher ranks of social hierarchy. Moreover, one might think that anti-alcohol campaigns that intended to utilize the movie industry in educational and explanatory work resulted in more rigorous censorship and thematic plans calling for production of movies with anti-alcohol character. Yet, before the mid-1970s such movies were impossible to find. I wonder if the thematic plan was fulfilled with the help of propagandistic and tempering cartoons and short sketches that were shown in the theaters between the movies. Two such examples are the cartoons *Drunken Cherries* (1972) and *Patient with the Bottle* (1979). So basically, regarding the temperance campaign, the situation resembled the good old "Leninist proportion" which determined that 75 percent of cinematic production should be entertainment films and 25 percent propaganda films.

In the middle of 1970s a radical breakthrough arrived in the Soviet cinema in terms of the exploitation of the alcoholism theme. For the first time after a fifty-year-hiatus, Soviet audiences were shown movies that concentrated on alcoholism and alcoholic character. It was probably the establishment of sobering-up stations at the beginning of the 1970s that changed the public discourse about alcoholism and interpreted it as a medical illness, not solely a form of antisocial misbehavior. At the beginning of the era of Soviet alcoholism films, however, movies displayed sobering-up stations as sanatoriums, such as in *100 Grams for Courage*. In

this movie, we learn how inebriates themselves are aware of the fact that since one is physically unstable, one is granted a trip to sanatorium. Quite soon, cineastes turned to *kinopravda*[291] (the filmed exploration of real life) and attempted to explore the causes and effects of alcoholism. Alcoholic protagonists changed from flat to more complex and their inner individual, not collective, struggle with and against alcoholism became the center of the alcoholism movies.

Indeed, the importance of collectivism was decreasing and eventually at the end of the 1980s Soviet cinema became dominated by the idea that "the most important aspect of any society or collective was the individual; at the same time, the individual consciousness had not changed."[292] This meant that the alcoholic protagonist struggled with taking responsibility and admitting his addiction, or was hindered from becoming sober by other addicts like himself. In *Friend*, Koliun sees his shattered image of alcoholic self through a cracked mirror. This epiphanic mirror scene is representative of a turning point in his life when he contemplates choosing between carrying on as an addict or facing life soberly. In *Trouble*, Slava decides to break with the collective and his drinking buddies, and vows to not return to the village after serving his sentence. For him, this is the only chance he has to stay sober. Some characters, like Ustin and Vanechka from *Grey Mouse*, however, admit that they will never be free from the "green serpent."

In order to make publicly visible the degenerated image of Soviet alcoholic, filmmakers threw aside the cinematic elements of *lakirovka.* The images of true-to-life sobering-up stations and treatment in *Beda*, *Ulan*, and *Friend*, an orphanage with the handicapped children of alcoholic parents in *Sunday Night*, and drinking binges that end with death in *Grey Mouse* and *Sunday Night* were very unconventional and striking for Soviet audiences. Additionally, individualism brought into the limelight the personal sufferings of the alcoholic's family members. Violence, social tensions and poverty, previously vaguely portrayed, became melded into one sub-theme in alcoholism films. I dare to argue that because of the gloomy atmosphere, dark colours and realistic images of everyday life, the

[291] The term was presented by Dziga Vertov in the 1920s, who considered it the only true cinema of the revolutionary working class. See Dziga Vertov, *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, ed. Annette Michelson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 5-9.
[292] Natasha Zhuravkina, "Fathers for the Fatherland: The Cult of the Leader in Russian Cinema," in *Russia on Reels: The Russian Idea in Post-Soviet Cinema*, edited by Birgit Beumers (London and New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 1999), 105.

alcoholism movies paved the way for the *chernukha* film which is said to have ruled the Soviet and Russian film scene from the late 1980s.[293]

Even when filmmakers were mainly concentrating on the gradual decline of the alcoholic character, they were also constantly trying to retreat from the stereotypical "the state-is-responsible" attitude. Instead, one could observe an inclination towards the unresolved psychoanalytic and personality conflicts within the individual and an accentuation of the impact of lacking willpower. Hence, the movies finally had a chance to reflect back a realistic image of the Soviet citizen, although the majority of alcoholism films did not captivate the audience's interest. This explains also why there were produced very few alcoholism films in the Soviet Union. However, the alcoholism films that were made between 1975 and 1991 did transform the cinematic and, I dare to argue, the public view on Soviet alcoholism and alcoholism issues. Gloomy and straightforward images of alcoholics changed them from "the enemies of the people" to underdogs and told the real stories of so many lives and families affected by this disease.

[293] About *chernukha* film, see Seth Graham, "Chernukha and Russian Film," *Studies in Slavic Cultures 1 (2000):* 9–27.

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Filmography

*alcoholism film
◦ temperance cartoon

The Carnival Night (1956)	Карнавальная ночь (1956)
The Cranes Are Flying (1957)	Летят журавли (1957)
Destiny of a Man (1959)	Судьба человека (1959)
Bootleggers (1961)	Самогонщики (1961)
I Step Through Moscow (1963)	Я шагаю по Москве (1963)
Give Me the Complaint Book (1964)	Дайте жалобную книгу (1964)
Operation Y and Other Shurik's Adventures (1965)	Операция „Ы" и другие приключения Шурика (1965)
Beware of the Car (1966)	Берегись автомобиля (1966)
Brief Encounters (1967)	Короткие встречи (1967)
Asya's Happiness (1967)	Асино счастье (1967)
Kidnapping, Caucasian Style (1967)	Кавказская пленница, или Новые приключения Шурика (1967)
The Diamond Arm (1968)	Бриллиантовая рука (1968)
White Sun of the Desert (1970)	Белое солнце пустыни (1970)
Gentlemen of Fortune (1972)	Джентльмены удачи (1972)
Drunken Cherries (1972)◦	Пьяные вишни (1972)◦
The Red Snowball Tree (1973)	Калина красная (1973)
Ivan Vasil'evich Changes Profession (1973)	Иван Васильевич меняет профессию (1973)
Afonia (1975)*	Афоня (1975)*
Elder Son (1975)	Старший сын (1975)
The Irony of Fate, or Enjoy Your Bath! (1975)	Ирония судьбы, или С лёгким паром! (1975)
100 Grams for Courage (1976)	Сто грамм для храбрости (1976)
For Family Reasons (1977)	По семейным обстоятельствам (1977)
Sunday Night (1977)*	Воскресная ночь (1977)*
Trouble (1977)*	Беда (1977)*

Ulan (1977)*	Улан 1977*
Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears (1979)	Москва слезам не верит (1979)
Autumn Marathon (1979)	Осенний марафон (1979)
September Vacation (1979)	Отпуск в сентябре (1979)
Patient with a Bottle (1979)◦	Пациент с бутылкой (1979)◦
According to the Criminal Investigation (1979)	По данным уголовного розыска (1979)
Petrovka, 38 (1980)	Петровка, 38 (1980)
Kinfolk (1981)	Родня (1981)
Station for Two (1982)	Вокзал для двоих (1982)
Love by Request (1983)	Влюблён по собственному желанию (1983)
The Hostel Is Provided for the Singles (1983)	Одиноким предоставляется общежитие (1983)
Love and Doves (1984)	Любовь и Голуби (1984)
Assa (1987)	Асса (1987)
Friend (1987)*	Друг (1987)*
Heart of a Dog (1988)	Собачье сердце (1988)
Grey Mouse (1988)*	Серая мышь (1988)*
Criminal Talent (1988)	Криминальный талант (1988)
Little Vera (1989)	Маленькая Вера (1989)
Intergirl (1989)	Интердевочка (1989)